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THE MINISTRY OF NATURE.

THE

MINISTRY OF NATURE

BY

HUGH MACMILLAN, D.D., LL.D., F.R.S.E.

AUTHOR OF

"*Bible Teachings in Nature*," "*The True Vine*," "*Holidays on High Lands*"

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INTRODUCTION

In the Nineteenth Psalm it is said, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, *where* their voice is not heard." Much of the beauty and force of these words is lost by the interpolation of the word *where*—printed in italics—to show that it is not in the original. By leaving it out, and adhering to the literal translation of the Hebrew version, the whole meaning of the passage is altered, and instead of a commonplace truism —or a mere tautology—we have the most significant poetry. "There is no speech nor language; their voice is not heard." The universe of visible things has no faculty of speech—no articulate language; and yet it has the power of declaring the glory of God, and conveying instruction to every age and country. It is a silent witness appealing to the mind of man in a way not less—but, when understood, even more forcible than written or spoken language—viz. by objective signs and pictorial representations. Age after age the

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sunlit and starlit pages of this older testament—this Bible of pictures—have been unfolding their open secret, and imparting their solemn lessons to the human world. All nature is a language appealing to the senses —the "God said" of creation. We understand the silent words, because He who formed the worlds created our minds in the image of His own. Although its voice is not heard, nature is nevertheless the universal interpreter—the older creature that first heard and learned the speech of God, and therefore mediates between God and man, and between man and man. All human language is the reflection of nature; its articulate words—the most prosaic as well as the most metaphorical—were originally borrowed from natural sights and sounds. We cannot utter a single sentence without drawing upon objective nature; we cannot converse with one another till nature steps in to give us the alphabet of conversation, and to interpret our mutual thoughts and feelings. We cannot pour out our souls before God in prayer unless nature says to us, as it were, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord." Nature is the interpreter of the Bible, not only because it explains what is specifically metaphorical in it, but because it explains all its language; it is the mould in which its thoughts are cast—the basis upon which its sublimest revelations rest; not only its embroidery, but the very warp of its substance.

St. Paul says that "the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being under-

stood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." In confirmation of this it may be mentioned that the phenomena of nature enable us to understand, so far as they can be understood by the human mind, the omniscience and omnipresence of God. Popular astronomy has made us familiar with the fact that the ray of light sent forth from each star in the firmament does not reach our eye at the same instant, but after an interval longer or shorter, according to the distance of the star; and that, as a consequence of this, we do not see the star as it actually is, but as it was at the moment when the ray of light was transmitted. Thus we see the moon as it was a second and a quarter before; the sun as it was about eight minutes before; Jupiter as it was fifty-two minutes previously; the principal star in the constellation of the Centaur as it was three years ago; Vega as it was twelve years ago; Arcturus as it was twenty-six years ago; the Pole Star as it was forty-eight years ago; Capella, as it was seventy years ago; and so on to a star of the twelfth magnitude, which appears to us as it looked four thousand years ago. All these orbs may have been extinguished during the interval, and yet we continue to see them shining still. It follows from these wonderful facts that an observer gifted with the necessary optical and other powers, might place himself at distances in the starry firmament so graduated as to recall all the past history of our world, and see it actually going on before his eyes. From a star of the twelfth magnitude he would

see the earth as it appeared in the time of Abraham, and in Vega as it existed twelve years ago. Passing swiftly from the one to the other, the whole history of the world from the time of Abraham to the present day would glance in rapid succession before him. Indeed it is conceivable that this transition might be made so swiftly that the whole wonderful panorama would pass before him in an instant of time. Thus we see how the universe still retains all the pictures of the past—which spread out farther and farther into space by the vibration of light—and may be made visible to eyes endowed with the necessary powers, and placed at the proper points of observation. By means of these actual suppositions, we are able to conceive of the omniscience of God regarding the past as a material all-surveying view. We can comprehend in some measure how space and time are to Him identical; how "the beginning and the end coalesce, and yet enclose everything intermediate."

"To your question now,
Which touches on the Workman and His work.
Let there be light, and there was light: 'tis so;
For was, and is, and will be, are but is;
And all creation is one act at once,
The birth of light: but we that are not all,
As parts can see but parts, now this, now that,
And live, perforce, from thought to thought, and make
One act a phantom of succession; thus
Our weakness somehow shapes the shadow, Time."

The omnipresence and yet distinct personality of God is further illustrated to us in a striking manner by

Dalton's law of the diffusion of gases. This law reveals to us that though gases gravitate like other forms of matter, and exhibit among themselves even greater differences of weight than either solids or liquids --yet nevertheless when they meet, each acts as a void or a vacuum to the other, and they intermingle completely, while at the same time preserving their individual identity, coalescing and coexisting, and yet continuing separate and distinct. It is by means of this beautiful law that our atmosphere is rendered fit for respiration, that clouds are formed, and rain and dew descend to nourish the life and beauty of the earth. It is the one exception to the most universal of all physical influences. The law of gravitation acts everywhere else, but here it is suspended, and its place supplied by another. Does it not therefore show to us a glimpse of a Great Designer, overruling all things for the good of His creatures? Behind this wonderful physical fact, do we not see the spiritual truth that is enshrined blazing forth? It is more than a proof of beneficent design; it is a reflection in material form of the image of God Himself. It enables us to understand in some measure how in the personal Jehovah we can live and move and have our being; how He forms—if I may use a term so much abused by the Pantheist—the universal medium of all spiritual existences, and yet loses nothing of that distinct personality which He presents to each.

The great advances of natural science in these days

have placed in a much clearer light the symmetry and order of external nature, and invested the idea of law with an absolute majesty inconceivable at an earlier time. A more perfect botany and zoology have taught us that the grand characteristic feature of God's work in the world of life is unity of type with variety of development. The exceptional formations—of which vegetable teratology takes cognizance — formerly regarded as monsters to be shunned, as lawless deviations from the ordinary rule, or at best as mere objects of curiosity, have now been found to be more in consonance with typical structures than the normal formations themselves. They are beautiful tendencies in the direction of the archetype, and are therefore great helps in the study of morphology. For example, the fuchsia, the woodruff, and the evening primrose have usually only four petals and four sepals; but not a season passes without many specimens of these flowers producing five petals and five sepals. These so-called monstrosities are in reality clear indications that the plants in which they occur are striving to attain the higher and fuller character of the rosaceous or quinary type, and are in ordinary circumstances prevented from doing so by some unknown law of non-development. It is by these malformations, and not by the common structures, that the plants in question are linked with the plants above them. Thus the very exceptions and deviations prove the law of vegetable life, and approach nearer to normal types instead of departing from

them. They show as truly as in the moral world that where there is no law there is no transgression. So also we find in zoology that there is no distinction save of degree, between the laws regulating normal organization and those by which so-called abnormal formations are regulated. Virchow has referred all morbid products to physiological types, and mentions that there is no new structure produced in the organism by disease. The cancer-cell, the pus-cell, and all other disease-produced cells have their patterns in the cells of healthy structure.* In the higher forms of animal life, the typical forms and members observed in lower animals meet and are perfected; and parts of their economy which exist but as symbols in the lower orders, acquire use and significance in the higher. The Darwinians, therefore, have seized upon the wrong end of a great truth, expressed ages ago by the Psalmist in these words—"My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."

An improved study of chemistry and mineralogy has also added its confirmation of the doctrine that there are no abrupt transitions in nature, and that distinctions of class are never absolute. The late Professor Graham has beautifully shown that the same matter may exist in a colloidal or gelatinous, and in a crystalline state. In

* See Dr. Maudsley's "Body and Mind."

the former condition matter has latent energy, and is "the probable primary source of the force appearing in the phenomena of vitality;" in the latter condition matter is purely statical and inert. And yet minerals, such as the hydrated peroxides of the aluminous class, may exist in the colloidal state; while animal structures, such as Funke's blood crystals, and animal substances, such as the silicic acid of sponges, may pass into the crystalline condition. Further, a more perfect geology has abandoned the old ideas of convulsions and cataclysms, in favour of a theory of slow gradual development of the earth's crust by forces similar to those which exist at present; and has enabled us to form a grand conception of a life of the universe—of a general law which unites and directs the successive forms of all organized beings.

All this exaltation of law in the natural world has had a most beneficial reaction in the spiritual world. Evolution, development, are the great doctrines of modern science, containing a large measure of truth, though pushed to an unwarrantable length; and religion is beginning to realize more and more the continuity and unity of God's dealings with men in all ages. We see that every part of the Bible witnesses in behalf of order and gradual progression; and that, as in the progressive history of the earth, all that has been modifies all that is, and all that will be, so in the whole of sacred history, the more we can discern of connection and preparation, the more we enter into God's true method of revealing

Himself. Our conception of God's character as the unchangeable Jehovah — who has no parallax, no shadow of turning—has also been exalted by this discipline of natural study. We no longer believe that He acts arbitrarily and capriciously. We see that there is a reason in the nature of things for all that He does; that no blind fate has any place within the bounds of the wide universe, but a stern and inflexible, because immutable law, having its highest expression in the death of the only-begotten Son of God. Our ideas of heaven, too, have been greatly modified by the correctives supplied by the discoveries of science. We no longer admit, like our ancestors, an abrupt transition between this world and the next. We believe that heaven lies latent in the present as the full-formed flower in the bud of spring—that heaven will be but the perfection and full unveiling of the glory of the earth. In the light of this idea we see a new meaning in the words of the Apostle—"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." We apply them to all nature, as well as to man, the microcosm of nature. Our ancestors looked upon matter as sinful, and upon nature as accursed; and therefore we cannot wonder that they should have pictured heaven as a world having no connection with this. But our investigations have taught us to reverence nature more and more as the expression of God's heart and mind to us—to call nothing in it which God has cleansed, common or unclean. Our

conceptions of matter have been greatly exalted and idealized. We know more of its beauty and perfection, and therefore we cannot believe that its marvellous scenes and objects, of which the wisest and the best of us know so lamentably little, shall pass away from us for ever, after this brief and tantalizing glimpse of them. There is nothing in nature that would parallel such a waste. We cannot but cherish the hope that one of the highest joys of the future state will be communion with God in the more perfect comprehension of the works of His hands; and that as the earth has passed through so many changes already, fitting it for a higher and yet higher type of life, so it will pass safely through the final change, and be revealed in all its glory as the final home of the redeemed.

We should have expected that our Lord in coming to our world would have employed images the most remote from nature and human life; that He would have given to men a revelation from heaven—something extraordinary and altogether unknown to earth. But in His teaching we find the things of God represented by the simplest things of nature, and by the ordinary occurrences of life. "Consider the lilies how they grow"—"Behold the fowls how they are fed," were the words with which He began His ministry, drawing attention in them to the common things that ever since the creation were uttering their unheeded lessons to the world showing to us that it is not a revelation that we need, but eyes to see—that the revelation is every-

where around us, if we would only care to look at and understand it. In the parables of the lily and the fowls, the seed and the tree, the vine and the fishes, He disclosed to us the great fact which we are constantly forgetting—that Nature has a spiritual as well as a material side—that she exists not only for the natural uses of the body, but also for the sustenance of the life of the soul. This higher ministry explains all the beauty and wonder of the world, which would otherwise be superfluous and extravagant. As the servant of common household wants, giving us bread to eat and water to drink, and raiment to put on, and air to breathe, and soil to stand and build upon, nature might have been clothed with homely russet garments girded for toil; but as the priestess of heaven, ministering in the holy place, appealing to the higher faculties of man, she is clothed like Aaron with temple vestments; and Solomon in all his glory is not arrayed like her. Her ultimate purposes are grander than her ordinary uses. Her forms are evanescent, but her ministry is everlasting. Her grass withereth and her flower fadeth, but the word of the Lord that speaketh through her endureth for ever. The truth which she teaches, and the beauty which she forms, are a part of the everlasting inheritance of the soul, and become incorporated with its life for evermore. It was a true instinct which made Manoah's wife exclaim when her husband said—"We shall surely die, because we have seen God"—"If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt-offering and a

meat-offering at our hands, neither would He have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these." And surely it is a true instinctive belief in the human heart that God does not mean to destroy us for ever—when He clothes the earth with so much beauty, and permits us to gaze upon scenes, and study objects, whose wonders and glories appeal to the highest wants and capabilities of our nature. Surely by the glory of perishing nature He is training our souls for the excelling glory of immortality. It would be well for us if we understood this more, and felt it deeper, for then the glory of nature would not be wasted upon us, as it too often is, by reason of our sordid pursuits; and instead of emptying everything of God, and banishing Him from His own creation by our scientific studies, we should see everything reflecting His image, and hear the whole earth chanting His praise. Wise men of science would be led by their star, and shepherds and rustic labourers by their toil, to the feet of the Divine Child, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and in whose spirit alone can any human being hope to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

THE SOWER 1

POETRY.—PALINGENESIS 22

CHAPTER II.

FRAGRANCE 24

CHAPTER III.

LEPROSY OF HOUSE AND GARMENTS 48

CHAPTER IV.

STONES CRYING OUT 76

CHAPTER V.

PAGE
THORNS THE CURSE OF ADAM AND THE CROWN OF CHRIST 97

POETRY.—PREVENTING MERCIES 121

CHAPTER VI.

TREACLE, OR LIKE CURES LIKE 124

CHAPTER VII.

FEEDING ON ASHES. 142

CHAPTER VIII.

SPIRITUAL CATHARISM 166

CHAPTER IX.

THE ACTION OF PRESENCE 191

CHAPTER X.

WINTER LEAVES 213

POETRY.—A GRAVE BESIDE A STREAM 239

CHAPTER XI.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS 240

POETRY—A WATERFALL 265

CHAPTER XII.

PAGE

SEEING AND NOT PERCEIVING 266

POETRY.—ORIZABA 286

CHAPTER XIII.

LOSS AND GAIN IN MIRACLES 280

CHAPTER XIV.

REJUVENESCENCE 321

THE MINISTRY OF NATURE.

CHAPTER I.

THE SOWER.

"Behold a sower went forth to sow."—MATTHEW xiii. 3.

THE parable of the Sower is the pattern, fundamental parable, which furnishes the key to the right understanding of all the rest. "Know ye not this parable? And how then will ye know all parables?" Like the illuminated initial of an old chronicle, which illustrates the text, it appropriately introduces our Lord's new method of instruction, and discloses in its own features the type upon which that peculiar instruction is modelled. The teaching of the parables was in itself the sowing of seed, the diffusion of truth in its seed-form, of brief pictorial sayings, compact and full of meaning, suggesting much that it would take long to tell, constructed for ordinary memory and common use, and fitted, when falling into susceptible hearts, to grow and develop their germinating fulness. The parable of the Sower brings us back to the beginning

of life, to the seed-condition in which the organic realm and the kingdom of heaven alike originate. As in nature it is through the dispersion of seed that the first form of life is established upon the basis of dead inert matter, so it is by the diffusion of spiritual truth that spiritual life is established upon the basis of human nature. In both cases the sowing of seed must be the first process towards a higher state of things. Man's natural life depends upon the sowing of corn. His whole civilization springs from it. His spiritual discipline is carried on, as one of its primary conditions, through the cultivation of the soil in the sweat of his face—which from first to last is an acted parable, a great visible picture of the most true and intimate connection between the outward husbandry of the ground and the inward husbandry of the soul. We see a beautiful illustration of Divine wisdom in the first fiat of creation being "Let there be light;" seeing that there is no element in the constitution of the earth of such paramount importance as light, or radiant force, developing and arranging its materials, modifying its natural features, forming its climate, and supplying the physical power needed for the maintenance of all life and organization. We see an equally beautiful illustration of the same Wisdom which made the world, in the first parable being that of the Sower; seeing that upon the process of sowing, man's capacity of improvement and capability of receiving spiritual instruction, and consequently all the revelations and experiences of the kingdom of heaven, depend.

In order to bring out the full significance of the few simple words with which the parable opens, I shall proceed to consider, very briefly, five things which seem to me to be implied in them.

(1) Let us look, first of all, at the *function* of the sower: "Behold a *sower* went forth to sow." In the natural world, sowing is not the first agricultural process. The ground in its natural state is not adapted for the reception and growth of the seed. It is covered with primeval forest, with the tangled native growth of the wilderness, and this must be cut down and rooted out. Huge boulders and the debris of rocks strew its surface, and these must be removed. Marshes, with their rank, noisome vegetation, occupy and disfigure valuable space, and create a pestilential atmosphere, and these have to be drained away. The soil, thus reclaimed, must further be trenched, and exposed to the influences of the weather. And then the ploughman comes, and draws his straight and uniform furrows, in which all the seed sown may have the same conditions of growth, and produce an equally abundant harvest. But it is a most significant circumstance, that our Saviour does not commence His parabolic teaching with any of these preparatory processes. The kingdom of heaven, in its first announcement to men, He likens, not to the pioneer in the pathless, homeless wilderness,—not to the woodman going forth with the axe, and cutting down the primeval trees, in order to clear a space for cultivation,—not to the ploughman going forth to tear up the soil,--but to the sower going forth to sow. He

presupposes a fixed and settled state of things,—civilized habits, a quiet scene of human industry and success. The negative radical processes have already been completed. The voice crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," has been heard and obeyed. The crooked places have been made straight, and the rough places smooth, by the preparatory ministry of Christ's witnesses in previous dispensations. The axe of all the Prophets and godly men of old has been laid at the root of, and lifted up upon, the thick obstructive trees. The Forerunner, by his baptism of repentance, has ploughed up the wild unproductive soil thus cleared. The season of grace is further advanced: the fulness of time is come. "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land."

It is in these circumstances that the sower goes forth to sow; and most beautifully does our Saviour in this figure symbolize the character in which He Himself, the great Sower, appeared on earth. The function of the sower is not destructive, but constructive. His mission is not to remove anything from the soil, to tear it up, to destroy anything in it or on it; but to cast into it something which it does not itself possess, something that has life and will impart life. The sowing of seed is the link by which dead mineral matter may be raised up to form a part of the noble vesture of life, by which the grain of sand may become a living cell. It is, so to speak, the mediator between the

organic and inorganic kingdoms, the clasped hand in which matter and life meet, and by means of which they exchange mutual services. In the process of growth the seed takes up the substances and forces of the soil, imparts to them a higher character, stamps them with the impress of vitality, and converts them to nobler uses. By the development of the seed, the wilderness is converted into a garden, the bare barren soil covered with beautiful and varied forms of life which minister to the wants of higher creatures. Thus was it with our Lord. The analogy applies to Him in the most perfect way. He went forth not to destroy, but to save; not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might have life. He came to impart to our dead inert world, what it had lost out of it,—the seed-principle of righteousness, the germ of eternal life. The human world had become divorced from the kingdom of heaven. Losing its connection with the higher spiritual realm, it had lost all its spiritual beauty and organization. It had retrograded into the condition of a barren, blighted wilderness, incapable of bringing forth any fruit pleasing to God, or profitable to man. It had become a waste of lifeless sand, where there was no principle of cohesion or elevation; and the selfish passions of men, like storms of the desert, whirled the separate units about at their pleasure, with destructive violence. All man's cultivation of this barren soil by efforts of his own, in the absence of heavenly principles, was as if a farmer should content himself with continually ploughing and harrowing the same field, without

putting any seed into it. Jesus came to sow, in this dry and parched land, the seed of holiness and happiness. He Himself, the *Sator et Semen*, the Sower and the Seed, was sown in our earth as the Seed of heaven, concentrating in Himself all the fulness of heaven, all the new future growth of the world. He was the great Archetype which the germination of the first seed sown on our earth typified, the explanation of the mystery hid from the beginning. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it, but he that hateth his life shall keep it unto life eternal." By His life on earth He united earth to heaven, formed a new and better creation upon the purified framework of the old. By His growth in the midst of earthly conditions, and in the mould of human experience, He spiritually organized, as it were, what had fallen away from the order and grace of God, what had become vitiated and disintegrated by sin, what was fast going down to join the inert kingdom of darkness and death, and made it capable of receiving a higher character and doing a nobler service. As St. Augustine says, "Christ appeared to the men of a decrepit and dying world, that while all around them was fading, they might through Him receive a new and youthful life." His history was a mighty expansive force, working outwardly from within, regenerating everything which it touched, assimilating the inner feelings of the mind and the outward relations of life. He did not seek by His words or works to uproot

what was already existing; He did not destroy the forms of society which prevailed at the time; He did not remove the Jewish institutions,—on the contrary, He sanctified and renewed them. He conserved and amalgamated all that was simply human and homogeneous with Himself. He would have gathered Jerusalem like a brood of chickens under His protecting wings. He would have saved the chosen people, if they would have accepted His salvation. He was indeed the true Reformer, making all things new by sowing in the world the seed of heaven, and thus raising in it a heavenly growth; imparting to it a principle of spiritual power and beauty, which by its development would counteract the decaying tendency of the world, choke out its evils and abuses, and so change its nature as to render it henceforth incapable of reproducing the old evils.

And this was the function which our Lord assigned to His disciples. He sent them forth not to uproot, but to sow; not to cut down, but to save; not to destroy the idolatries and superstitions of the surrounding nations, but to preach the Gospel to every creature—the new power of the resurrection which had come into the world. From the empty tomb of the Crucified One they took of the corn of wheat that had died there, and brought forth much fruit, and sowed it broadcast over the field of the world, in fulfilment of the prophecy, "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains: the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon; and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure for ever; His name shall be continued

as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed." And assuredly this is the function which our Lord assigns to all His servants still. They are sowers going forth to sow. To the wicked, which is His sword, He commits the task of cutting down and extirpating evils and abuses; but His own people are to be ministers of salvation, not of destruction: to build up, and not to pull down; to plant, and not to uproot. They are to contend against evil and error, not by using the weapons of the cynic and satirist, but by sowing the peaceable fruits of righteousness. If they confine themselves to testifying and protesting against the ways of the world, they will inevitably fail. The fate of Elijah's mission will be theirs. By the earthquake, the whirlwind, and the fire, he sought to destroy the worship of Baal in Israel; and in deepest despondency, under the juniper-tree in the wilderness, he bewailed his utter failure: "Take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers." The ministry of Elisha, on the other hand, was a wide success, because he employed the still small voice of life and love. Thus it always is: the effect of destructive means of good is great and startling at the time, but it is not enduring. Such agencies do not supply anything to occupy the place of that which they take away; and that nature, which abhors a vacuum, hastens to fill up the blank with the old and habitual. The soil that is cleared of thorns and thistles by fire and sword, speedily covers itself with the old weeds again. The evils cut down to the ground have deep tap-roots, that go far beyond the reach of hoe and axe, and put

forth new shoots when stimulated by fresh temptations. Only by the expulsive power of a new life can the old evil growth be effectually and permanently destroyed. The sowing of the seed of goodness even among the rank growths of evil, will do in the spiritual world what the growth of the wild flowers of England is doing at this moment among the rank vegetation of New Zealand, and what the fire and hoe of the settler have failed to do. We are told that the common clover of our fields, tender as it looks, is actually rooting out the formidable New Zealand flax, with its fibrous leaves and strong woody roots. By the law of natural selection, as it were, in the spiritual world, the stronger growth of heaven will extirpate the feebler growth of earth. The godliness that is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come, will overcome in the end the worldliness that is profitable only for a few things and for this life. Let us learn then from this feature of the parable our duty as Christ's disciples. While manifesting righteous indignation, as He manifested it, when occasion requires, our office in the main, as Christ's sowers, is to overcome evil with good: not to abuse what we do not like, but to show a more excellent way; not to utter woes against error, but to eliminate and construct the measure of truth that may be mingled with it. We are not to be busy in party antagonisms, but in building up truth; not to be striving under religious names to gain adherents, but to win mankind to the love of Jesus. By going forth to sow the Divine seed, we are to raise up, by this new force, a world lying in the arms of the wicked

one, into the higher and nobler life of communion and fellowship with God.

(2) But I pass on, to consider next the *loneliness* of the sower. Our Lord, lifting up His eyes when uttering this parable, may have seen a little way off on the fertile shores of the Lake of Galilee, a solitary husbandman, busy scattering his wheat-seed in the furrows; and therefore He said, "*A* sower went forth to sow." The sower before our Saviour's eye was alone; there was no one to bear him company; he was doing the work unaided. In the natural world there is no more striking contrast than between the sociableness of reaping and the solitude of sowing. It is with man's work as it is with nature's work: as one seed yields thirty or an hundred-fold in the harvest, so one man can sow a great breadth of land, which it will require a large company to reap. The sower is always a lonely man; he goes forth alone, he toils all day alone,—marching from furrow to furrow, scattering the precious seed; while the reaper is ever a social man, working in a gay group, amid sympathetic and jubilant gladness. So is it in the human world; thousands reap the fruit of what one man sows. The thought of one brain, the words of one mouth, the work of one life, minister to the wants of countless multitudes in future generations. Innumerable illustrations of this great law of life, from every department of human experience, will occur to everyone. The triumphs of our modern civilization, whose benefits are so widely diffused, are the long results of the thought and toil of a few solitary individuals, whom the world neglected and

forgot. The great Sower of our marvellous Christian civilization was pre-eminently a lonely Man. From the time when He said to His earthly parents in the temple, who did not understand or sympathise with Him, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" to the last hour of His life, when the terrible desertion of His heavenly Father constrained Him to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" He trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Him. He was far in advance of His own age, far in advance of all ages. He was alone amid His disciples, even when they were nearest to Him, even when St. John lay upon His breast. We hear Him saying, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter;" and again, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" They were not with Him in the wilderness, when He obtained for all who believe in Him His victory over Satan; they could not watch with Him in Gethsemane, when drinking our bitter cup to the dregs; they all forsook Him and fled when He was brought a prisoner before Pilate, that His disciples might be set free; they stood afar off, beholding, when He was crucified—the Just for the unjust,—that He might bring sinners unto God. And as with the Master, so with all His servants. They go forth at His bidding alone to sow the seed of Gospel truth in the world. The dreary sense of isolation often sinks deep into their souls; they feel painfully at times the want of harmony between their circumstances and their feelings.

How often has the bitter lament of Elijah at Horeb, "And I, even I only, am left;" and the sad words of St. Paul, "I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state; for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's,"—been wrung from the desolate hearts of God's servants in all ages. St. Columba came alone to diffuse the light of Christianity in our dark isle. Dr. Judson went forth alone to convert the heathen Burmese; Brainerd was a solitary pioneer of the Gospel among the savage Indian tribes of the far West; Martyn laboured single-handed among the Mahometans of the far East; the martyred Williams sowed alone the first seed of life in the virgin isles of the South Sea. And in our own country hundreds go forth alone into the streets of the city, and the lanes and waysides of the country, to cast precious seed wherever God's Providence opens a furrow in the hard and stony ground. And what is the result? Lift up the eyes, and where these solitary sowers went forth we see fields white unto the harvest; we see thousands in the joy of harvest reaping the fruit of what they had sown. And what encouragement is there in such examples to us too to go forth to do good, even though we have none to aid or cheer us on! I fear that in these days we forget that the sower *must* be a lonely man. We are apt to put the conditions of reaping in the place of those of sowing. We make our sower go forth not alone, but in a crowd of fellow-labourers. We say, not "*A* sower," but "A *band* of sowers went forth to sow." This is the age of associations; individual effort is in a large manner superseded by corporate

action. We do nearly all our good by committees and societies. Many, feeling unable altogether to escape from the responsibility of doing something for the cause of Christ, pay others to act as their substitutes: and thus organizations are necessitated to accomplish mechanically, as it were, what can only be done effectually by individual effort. Such organizations no doubt accomplish a vast amount of good, and it is not easy to see how, in the present state of society, they can safely be abolished; but it must be acknowledged by all who have thought deeply upon the subject, that Christian work has been too exclusively directed into this channel, and that it would be well if along with this concerted action there were more of spontaneous and intelligent individual exertion. What the world needs more than anything else,—more than gifts of money, rules, speeches, theories, organizations,—is the revival of personal agency; the touch of a hand, the glance of an eye, the tone of a voice, the sympathy of warm loving hearts, charged with all healing influences, to sow the desolate wilderness thickly with the good seed of the kingdom. We wish the sower to go forth alone, and by individual contact with the evil of the world, to remedy it by the influence of personal faith and living love. Like Elijah, we want the servant of Christ to lay his own living body, through sympathy, upon the dead body of suffering and sin; and thus, by imparting warmth to it, prepare it for restoration to spiritual life. Like a greater than Elijah, who identified Himself with the outcast of society, and said, "Zaccheus, come down, for to-day I must *abide* at thy house,"

we want every Christian, who is a debtor to all men, to go home with the poor and the ignorant, and make their trials his own, that thus he may truly relieve and bless them. It is required that there should be a real crucifixion with Christ in the blessed labours of the cross. Such sowing would do far more good than any other agency. He that sows and he that reaps in such a case would rejoice together in the harvest.

(3) The *season* in which the sower goes forth to sow is bleak and desolate. There is no foliage on the trees, no verdure on the meadows. The sky overhead, when not covered with dark clouds, is of a cold stony blue; the sunshine has a brassy gleam, and shines mockingly upon bare pastures; and the spring breathes between her hands, as it were, to keep warmth in the shivering creatures she calls to life. Thus it is in the spiritual world when the sower goes forth to sow. He labours among the decay of nobler things,—the remains of former beauty now withered and sodden into deformity. He finds nothing congenial; the world looks coldly upon his efforts; bitter blasts of persecution assail him. So was it with the Apostles in the spring-time of Christianity. All old things were passing away. Irreligion and sensuality among the heathen had taken the place of belief in the old rites and superstitions. Pharisaic trivialities and Sadducean scepticism filled the minds of the Jews, instead of the bright hopes of the Messianic kingdom which their fathers had cherished. The scythe of change had shorn off all the flower and glory of every system social and religious, and only its stubble

was left rotting in the ground. On everything had settled the "cold sad melancholy" which breathes in the works of all the writers of the time. The climax of human effort had been reached: nothing more could be done; and men had to rest behind the dreary consciousness of failure in all that had been tried before. It was in this chill pause of the world's progress, this bleak, barren season of the world's history, that the Apostolic sowers went forth to sow the seed of Gospel truth, and begin a spring-time of grace,—a new course of development, which has gone on ever since. And He who sent them forth on this blessed mission of the world's renovation warned them of what treatment they should receive while carrying it on. He told them that the world's wintry winds would blow upon them; that they should be hated of all men for His sake. That peculiar age can never return. The world can no more go back or lose out of it the heavenly odours, the celestial consciousness, the sense of other worlds, with which the blossoming of Christ's life upon it and the preaching of the Gospel have charged its atmosphere. We have passed out of the stormy gloom of winter, and the day is lengthening and brightening, but it is yet only the winter solstice, and therefore the sower has still to repeat within his narrower sphere the experience of the Apostles. Christianity has yet effected but little. There are vast spaces where its light has never penetrated; there are seething masses among ourselves who are utter strangers to its heavenly grace; and so long as this state of things exists, so long will there be a bleak

and desolate season to the sower. But he who, dismayed by these cold ungenial circumstances, takes his ease at home, and refuses to go forth to create an Eden in the waste, will not share in the joy of harvest. How striking the contrast between the sowing and the reaping time, between the bleak skies of March and the mellow autumn sunshine! And yet the one prepares the way for the other. It is because the sower goes forth to sow in the cold and gloom of early spring, that the reaper gathers in his golden sheaves when earth is at her fairest, and the full and perfected beauty of nature seems like a dream of heaven.

(4) Sowing is a *sorrowful* process. The sower goes forth weeping, bearing precious seed. He sows in tears; his act involves self-denial. The farmer sacrifices a certain portion of his corn in order to gain a harvest. That seed-corn may be all that he has,—all that remains of the store which he had garnered up for household use. He may feel tempted to withhold it, and to use it for his own food; but unless he casts it into the ground, and leaves it in the cold furrow in spring, he cannot expect to get the rich increase in autumn. Self-denial is absolutely necessary on the part of the husbandman in order to success in his business. He must part with a certain amount of present good in order to obtain a larger amount of future good. And so it is with the spiritual sower. If he would succeed in his blessed work, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow Christ. He must give away what costs him trouble, what causes him loss, what he will miss. He must hate his own life,

surrender it as a fruit or seed to be sown and to die, in order to become the beginning of a new and blessed growth in others. Not only does the law of vegetation teach him this; the law of his own natural life adds its emphatic Amen. It is written on the fleshly tables of his own body. He lives by self-sacrifice. Some parts of his body must die, in order that other parts may live. The amount of activity which his life displays is exactly measured by the amount of interstitial death which he dies. It is interesting to notice how, in the process of digestion for instance, the death of one part of the body ministers to the life of the rest. Digestion in man is a somewhat analogous process to germination in the seed. As in the seed sown the nutritive part dies, or undergoes a chemical change, in order to feed the embryo, so in the human body the gastric juice is on the descending career, and is truly dying matter. It is a part of the incipient decay of the body set aside to react upon the food, and prepare it for replacing those parts of the tissues that have become effete and are being removed. Thus, in order that our bodies may be nourished, there must be the vicarious sacrifice of some portions of their substance; so in the great corporate body of mankind, those who wish to fulfil the law of Christ must give up for the good of others what would contribute to their own comfort and well-being, if spiritual life and health are to be generally diffused. They must make self-sacrifice the law of their existence, and willing suffering for others the medium of their own perfection. For "the paradox of the cross is the truth of life."

But the process of sowing is also sorrowful because of the uncertainty of the result. The seed lies long out of sight in the cold dark soil; and when it springs up, it is exposed to a thousand casualties. Blight and mildew lie in wait to seize upon the blade to wither it, upon the ear to make it abortive, and upon the full corn in the ear to convert its nutriment into dust and ashes. The sun may scorch it, the caterpillar may devour it, the rain may prevent its ripening, the wind may thrash it when it is ripe, and, after all, the crop may not remunerate for the toil and cost expended upon it. All these uncertainties call for the exercise of faith and patience, and tend to make the farmer provident and earnest. And is it not so with the Christian sower? Under whatever circumstances, whatever may be the nature of our Christian work, the best and wisest of us can know but little of what we are really doing. We may so toil, that, like Elijah, we may be tempted to think that we have lived in vain. We ourselves may see the fruit of what we sow; or we may labour, and others may enter into our labours. Our outward immediate results may be worthless; our spiritual results, unknown and unsuspected by ourselves, may be precious and enduring. And we can understand the reason why there should be this large variable element in the problem of Christian activities. Our ignorance of results is fitted to teach us greater faith and more implicit dependence upon God. By this is fostered all that is most precious and vital in our work. We have the assurance that we are toiling under the guidance of an unseen Hand, and in the strength of a

never-failing promise, and this prevents our work from becoming a mere game of chance. And, on the other hand, there is a zone of uncertainties about our toil,—an apparently capricious element in it: it is undertaken amid conditions whose force we have no means of calculating; and this prevents our work from becoming monotonous and mechanical, stimulates us to labour faithfully and prayerfully, tarrying the Lord's leisure, waiting patiently upon Him who can lift us above all anxious care, for immediate or striking results. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

(5) Lastly, I have to consider *the nature of the seed* which the sower sows. The farmer sows the fruit of the previous harvest. The end of one year of growth becomes the beginning of a new year of growth. The seed which he casts into the ground represents within its living germ the result and reward of his toil and patience for many a long month. It has cost him a whole year of his life,—a whole year's expenditure of much that is best and worthiest in him. Much of himself has grown with its growth, and is garnered up in its life. Nay, more, the seed which he sows is the embodiment of all the toil and patience of all the cultivators of the corn, back to "the world's grey fathers." Its existence would not have been, had not all the living generations of men toiled in the sweat of their brow to perpetuate and improve it. Now so is it with the seed

which the spiritual sower sows. It is Gospel truth, quick with life, which has been handed down, with enlarging significance and power, through the history of kings and prophets and godly men of old, from the first preacher of righteousness. It represents the cumulative experience of all who at sundry times and in divers manners revealed to their fellows the truth of God. It represents all the spiritual growth and experience of the sower himself. We cannot sow effectually in the spiritual seed-field what is merely handed down to us, what we merely buy with money, without any toil or trouble of our own. We cannot go forth with the experience of others to make it the seed of a spiritual harvest. We must give our own life in our teaching, as the plant gives its own life away in its seed—be at once the sower and the seed. The word of truth must be the word of life,—have our own life shrined in it, expressed by it, if it is to become the means of life to others. The seed of God's truth must have been sown in our own heart, grown up there, gathered round it, and drawn up into its fair expanding growth, from the soil and atmosphere of our own being, our own peculiarities of spiritual experience; and from this fair plant of grace, that has grown with our growth and ripened with our ripeness, we take the seed that is to reproduce a similar growth of blessedness in other hearts and lives. We sow what has cost the toil and sweat of our own brow, what is the end of our own discipline, what is the flower and fruit and glory of our own life. It is only the seed that is thus grown and ripened that will deeply influence those in

whose hearts it is sown, transforming and renewing them,—that, under the blessing of the Spirit, will prove superior to all the powers of dead inert nature opposed to it,—and in a more wonderful manner than even the vegetable seed, pushing out of the way the strongest obstacles, will find lodgment and room for growth, in favourable soil,—in all that is deepest and most lasting in human nature. And now, who will go forth under these conditions, and, counting the cost, undertake this blessed work? God needs sowers; for there are many destroyers,—many who cut down and blight, and add to the barrenness and desolation which the curse of man's sin first produced in the world. Few there are who are fellow-workers with God in restoring the withered beauty, in bringing back the Eden blessing of fertility and abundance. Every reaper should be a sower; every subject of Divine grace should be a medium of it; every one who has gathered a spiritual harvest, however slight, should sow the fruit of it; every one who has got good should do good. The seed kept out of the soil will not only abide alone, but it will part with the life that it has, it will lose its germinating power; it will rust and wither and prove worthless: but if sown, it will preserve its life, and be the parent of endless future life. "He that loveth his life shall lose it; but he that hateth his life shall keep it unto life eternal."

PALINGENESIS.

"For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."—THE SONG OF SOLOMON, ii. 11, 12.

THE fretful April tears are shed; the dead things of the past,
Stirred by the cruel winds of March, are laid to rest at last.
Old memories nourish new-born hopes, as Autumn's withered leaves
Supply the warp on which the Spring its rich embroidery weaves,
And Nature's grand kaleidoscope discloses to the view
The broken toys of former joys restored with beauty new.
Once more has come the balmy May; and by her magic spell
The shadows dark are charmed away that o'er my spirit fell.
I hear her low voice, as she lulls the lilies on her breast,
Or combs the pine-tree's flowing hair upon the mountain's crest.
I know her haunts in wood and wold; for where her footsteps pass,
Springs up in Eden loveliness the radiance of the grass.
Each tree she kindles by her torch bursts into leafy flames,
And, like the sacred desert-bush, God's presence there proclaims.
The limes their foliage interlace along the lane's arcade,
And make a mystery of the place, with mingled light and shade.
The chestnuts spread their leafy palms in blessing on the air,
And from their minarets of bloom call all the trees to share.
With bridal blossoms, pure and sweet, the blushing orchards glow;
And on the hawthorn-hedges lie soft wreaths of scented snow.
And where the amber clouds dissolve in raindrops brief and bright,
A world of fair and fragile flowers is born to life and light;
Unnurtured by the care of man, they spring forth from the sod,
The free, glad offerings of the earth,—the precious gifts of God.
The grey-haired daisies, ever young, transfigure every field,
And to the old, world-weary heart the joy of childhood yield.
The primroses, with lavish wealth, their golden largess spread,
And on the dusty way-side banks a mimic sunshine shed.
The fairy wind-flowers cluster thick beneath the sheltering trees,
And shine amid the twilight shades, the forest Pleiades.
The wall-flowers on the ruined fane their fiery censers swing,
And where rich incense once arose, a richer incense fling.

Hid in their cloistered leaves, the nun-like lilies of the vale,
In fragrant ministries of love, their meek white lives exhale.
And dearer, stronger far than all the careworn heart to move,
The violets gleam among the moss, like eyes of those we love,
And speak to every lingering breeze, in voice of perfume low,
Of things that touch the soul to tears from days of long-ago.
Filled from the full cup of the hills, the free rejoicing streams
Are flashing down the long green vales, in showers of sunny gleams;
And every little passing wave seems like a laughing tongue,
Revealing all the secret lore of Nature in its song.
From morn to night the air is bright with sheen of glancing wings,
And thrilled, like voices in a dream, with insect-murmurings.
The lark—a wingèd rapture—soars and sings at heaven's own gate;
The blackbird tunes his mellow flute to cheer his patient mate.
And in the firwood's mystic shrine all day in ecstasy,
The thrush in tuneful chorus chants its "Benedicite."
While from the uplands far and faint, with spell all bosoms own,
Unchanged through changing ages comes the cuckoo's monotone.
God reigneth, and the earth is glad! her large, self-conscious heart
A glowing tide of life and joy pours through each quickened part.
The very stones Hosannas cry; the forests clap their hands;
And in the benison of heaven each lifted face expands.
And day, too short for all its bliss, lingers with half-closed eyes
When every sunset cloud has paled, and moon and stars arise.
Awake and sing, ye in the dust that dwell; for as the dew
Of herbs, a blessed dew from heaven our spirit shall renew;
And with a quickened pulse, we'll gaze upon the bright love-looks
That woo us all day long, from trees and flowers and murmuring brooks;
And see a beauteous, heavenly thought in everything around;
And lessons learn of faith and hope from every sight and sound.
And, God! our cold ungrateful hearts teach Thou to feel and know
How much Thy bounteous hand hath blessed this world of sin and woe,—
How deep's the debt of thankfulness that unto Thee we owe!

CHAPTER II.

FRAGRANCE.

"Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices."—SOLOMON'S SONG, iv. 13, 14.

OF all man's sources of enjoyment, none display more clearly the bountifulness of God than the fragrant odours of nature. The world might have been made entirely scentless, and yet every essential purpose have been fulfilled. The vegetable kingdom, which is the great storehouse of perfumes, might have performed all its functions, and yet not a single plant exhaled an agreeable odour. Fragrance seems so wholly superfluous and accidental, that we cannot but infer that it was imparted to the objects which possess it, not for their own sakes, but for our gratification. We regard it as a peculiar blessing, sent to us directly from the hand of our heavenly Father; and we are the more confirmed in this idea by the fact that the human period is the principal epoch of fragrant plants. Geologists inform us that all the eras of the earth's history previous to the Upper

Miocene were destitute of perfumes. Forests of club-mosses and ferns hid in their sombre bosom no bright-eyed floweret, and shed from their verdant boughs no scented richness on the passing breeze. Palms and cycads, though ushering in the dawn of a brighter floral day, produced no perfume-breathing blossoms. It is only when we come to the periods immediately antecedent to the human that we meet with an odoriferous flora. God placed man in a sweet-scented garden as his home. He adorned it with labiate flowers, modest in form and sober in hue, but exhaling a rich aromatic fragrance at every pore. And so widely and lavishly did He distribute this class of plants over the globe, that at the present day in the south of Europe they form one nineteenth part of the flora ; in the tropics one twenty-sixth ; and even on the chill plains of Lapland, out of every thirty-five plants, one is a sweet-smelling labiate. In our own country, the tribe is peculiarly abundant and highly prized. Basil, marjoram, and lavender, balm and mint, rosemary and thyme, are dear to every heart, and are as fragrant as their own leaves with the sweetest poetry of rural life. Banished now from the garden to make room for rich and rare exotics, they still linger in romantic, old-fashioned places, and are carefully cultivated by the cottager in his little plot of ground. In quiet country villages the lavender-sprig still scents the household linen ; the bouquet of balm or mint is still carried to church with the Bible and the white pocket-handkerchief, and mingles its familiar perfume with the devotional exercises ; and the rosemary is still placed on

the snowy shroud of the dead cottager, soothingly suggestive of the sweet and lasting perfume left behind in the dark tomb, by the Rose of Sharon, Mary's son, who once lay there. All these are indeed "plants of grey renown," as Shenstone calls them. They came into the world with man; they were created for man's special gratification; and they have continued ever since in intimate fellowship with him as ministers to some of his simplest and purest joys. They were prepared, too, against the day of Christ's anointing and burying; for some of the finest spices with which Joseph of Arimathea embalmed his dead body, were products of the labiate family; and in this sacred use they have received a consecration which for ever hallows them to the Christian heart.

No sense is more closely connected with the sphere of soul than the sense of smell. It reaches more directly and excites more powerfully the emotional nature than either sight or hearing. It is an unexplored avenue, leading at once, and by a process too enchanting to examine, into the ideal world. Its very vagueness and indefiniteness make it more suggestive, and quicken the mind's consciousness. Its agency is most subtle and extensive—going down to the very depths of our nature, and back to the earliest dawn of life. Memory especially is keenly susceptible to its influence. Every one knows how instantaneously a particular odour will recall the past circumstances associated with it. Trains of association long forgotten—glimpses of old familiar things—mystic visions and memories of youth, beyond the reach

even of the subtle power of music—are brought back by the perfume of some little flower noteless to all others. Looks of long ago answer to our gazing; touches of hands, soft as a young trembling bird, lying in ours; words that were brimful of tenderness; joys that had no sorrow in their satisfying fruitage, come back with the passing breath of mignonette, caught from some garden by the wayside in the sweet, sad autumn eve. Lime-blossoms, murmurous with bees in the shady avenue—hyacinth-bells, standing sentinel beside some sapphire spring—violets, like children's eyes heavy with sleep, on some greenwood bank—each exhales a fragrance into which all the heart of Nature seems to melt, and touches the soul with the memories of the years. It is on account of this far-reaching power of fragrance, its association with the deep and hidden things of the heart, that so many of the Bible images appeal to our sense of smell. It is regarded as an important means of communication with heaven, and a direct avenue for the soul's approach to the Father of spirits. The acceptance of man's offerings by God is usually represented in the anthropomorphism of the Bible, as finding its expression in the sense of smell. When Noah offered the first sacrifice after the flood, "the Lord," we are told, "smelled a sweet savour." The drink-offerings and the various burnt-offerings prescribed by Levitical law, were regarded as a sweet savour unto the Lord. Christ, the antitype of these institutions, is spoken of as having given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. And the Apostle Paul, employing

the same typical language, speaks of himself and the other Apostles as "unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life." The Psalms and the prophetic writings are full of the most beautiful and expressive metaphors, applied to the most solemn persons and things, borrowed from perfumes; while the whole of the Song of Solomon is like an Oriental garden stocked with delicious flowers, as grateful to the sense of smell as to the sense of sight.

In the gorgeous ceremonial worship of the Hebrews, none of the senses were excluded from taking part in the service. The eye was appealed to by the rich vestments and the splendid furniture of the holy place; the ear was exercised by the solemn sound of the trumpet, and the voice of praise and prayer; and the nostril was gratified by the clouds of fragrant smoke that rose from the golden altar of incense and filled all the place. Of these, the sense of smell occupied, perhaps, the most prominent place; for, as we have seen, the acceptance of the worship was always indicated by a symbol borrowed from this sense: "The Lord smelled a sweet savour." The prayer of the people ascended as incense, and the lifting up of their hands as the evening sacrifice. The offering of incense formed an essential part of the religious service. The altar of incense occupied one of the most conspicuous and honoured positions in the tabernacle and temple. It stood between the table of shewbread and the golden candlestick in the holy place.

It was made of shittim or cedar wood, overlaid with plates of pure gold. On this altar a censer full of incense poured forth its fragrant clouds every morning and evening; and yearly as the day of atonement came round, when the high priest entered the holy of holies, he filled a censer with live coals from the sacred fire on the altar of burnt-offerings, and bore it into the sanctuary, where he threw upon the burning coals the "sweet incense beaten small," which he had brought in his hand. Without this smoking censer he was forbidden, on pain of death, to enter into the awful shrine of Jehovah. Notwithstanding the washing of his flesh, and the linen garments with which he was clothed, he dare not enter the holiest of all with the blood of atonement, unless he could personally shelter himself under a cloud of incense. The ingredients of the holy incense are described with great precision in Exodus: "Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like weight: and thou shalt make of it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy." This mixture was to be pounded into very small particles, and deposited as a very holy thing in the tabernacle, before the ark of the testimony, so that there might be a store of it always in readiness. According to Rabbinical tradition, a priest or Levite, one of the fifteen prefects of the temple, was retained, whose special duty it was to prepare this precious compound; and a part of the temple was given up to him for his use as a laboratory, called, from this

circumstance, "the house of Abtines." So precious and holy was this incense considered, that it was forbidden to make a similar perfume for private use on pain of death.

It has been supposed by some writers that incense was invented for the purpose of concealing or neutralizing the noxious effluvia caused by the number of beasts slaughtered every day in the sanctuary. Other writers have attached a mystical import to it, and believed that it was a symbol of the breath of the world arising in praise to the Creator, the four ingredients of which it was composed representing the four elements. While a third class, looking upon the tabernacle as the palace of God, the theocratic King of Israel, and the ark of the covenant as His throne, regarded the incense as merely corresponding to the perfume so lavishly employed about the person and appointments of an Oriental monarch. It may doubtless have been intended primarily to serve these purposes and convey these meanings, but it derived its chief importance in connection with the ceremonial observances of the Mosaic ritual, from the fact of its being the great symbol of prayer. It was offered at the time when the people were in the posture and act of devotion; and their prayers were supposed to be presented to God by the priest, and to ascend to Him in the smoke and odour of that fragrant offering. Scripture is full of allusions to it, understood in this beautiful symbolical sense. Acceptable, prevailing prayer was a sweet-smelling savour to the Lord; and prayer that was unlawful, or hypocritical, or unprofitable, was rejected

with disgust by the organ of smell. "Incense is an abomination to me," said the Lord to the rebellious Jews in the days of Isaiah. We are told that when the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, on account of the awful death of Korah and his associates, Aaron took, at the command of Moses, a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and standing between the living and the dead, swinging his censer, he made an atonement for the people, so that the plague was stayed. And Malachi, predicting the universal spread of Jehovah's worship, sums up that worship under the symbol of incense: "And in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts." Doubtless the Jews felt, when they saw the soft white clouds of fragrant smoke rising slowly from the altar of incense, as if the voice of the priest were silently but eloquently pleading in that expressive emblem in their behalf. The association of sound was lost in that of smell, and the two senses were blended in one. And this symbolical mode of supplication, as Dr. George Wilson has remarked, had this one advantage over spoken or written prayer, that it appealed to those who were both blind and deaf, a class that are usually shut out from social worship by their affliction. Those who could not hear the prayers of the priest could join in devotional exercises symbolized by incense, through the medium of their sense of smell; and the hallowed impressions shut out by one avenue were admitted to the mind and heart by another.

The altar of incense stood in the closest connection with the altar of burnt-offerings. The blood of the sin-offering was sprinkled on the horns of both on the great day of annual atonement. Morning and evening, as soon as the sacrifice was offered, the censer poured forth its fragrant contents; so that the perpetual incense within ascended simultaneously with the perpetual burnt-offering outside. Without the live coals from off the sacrificial altar, the sacred incense could not be kindled; and without the incense previously filling the holy place, the blood of atonement from the altar of burnt-offering could not be sprinkled on the mercy-seat. Beautiful and expressive type of the perfect sacrifice and the all-prevailing intercession of Jesus—of intercession founded upon atonement, of atonement preceded and followed by intercession! Beautiful and expressive type too of the prayers of believers kindled by the altar-fire of Christ's sacrifice, and perfumed by his merits! No fitter symbols could the Apostle John find to describe the services of the upper sanctuary, even though in his day the symbolic dispensation was waxing old and passing away. The temple opened in heaven was a counterpart of the old temple of Jerusalem; and the four-and-twenty elders clothed in white, who sat around the throne of God, and represented the church of all time, held in the one hand harps, and in the other golden vials full of odours which are the prayers of saints—music and incense, audible sound, and visible vapour and invisible fragrance—eye, ear, and nostril—mingling together, and uniting in the fullest expression and

highest ideal of worship. Nor was this symbol altogether an arbitrary one. There was a fitness in the nature of things in incense being regarded as an embodied prayer. Perfume is the breath of flowers, the sweetest expression of their inmost being, an exhalation of their very life. It is a sign of perfect purity, health, and vigour; it is a symptom of full and joyous existence; for disease, and decay, and death yield not pleasant but revolting odours. And, as such, fragrance is in nature what prayer is in the human world. Prayer is the breath of life, the expression of the soul's best, holiest, and heavenliest aspirations: the symptom and token of its spiritual health, and right and happy relations with God. The natural counterparts of the prayers that rise from the closet and the sanctuary are to be found in the delicious breathings, sweetening all the air, from gardens of flowers, from clover crofts, or thymy hill-sides, or dim pine-woods, and which seem to be grateful, unconscious acknowledgments from the heart of nature for the timely blessings of the great world-covenant; dew to refresh and sunshine to quicken.

But not in the incense of prayer alone were perfumes employed in the Old Testament economy. The oil with which the altars and the sacred furniture of the tabernacle and temple were anointed—with which priests were consecrated for their holy service, and kings set apart for their lofty dignity—was richly perfumed. It was composed of two parts of myrrh, two parts of cassia, one part cinnamon, and one part sweet calamus, with a sufficient quantity of the purest olive oil to give it the

proper consistency. Like incense, it was regarded as peculiarly holy, and no other oil like it was allowed to be made or used for common purposes on pain of death. One of the sweetest names of Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One, because He was anointed with the fragrant oil of consecration for His great work of obedience and atonement. As our King and Great High Priest, He received the outward symbolical chrism, when the wise men of the East laid at His feet their gifts of gold, myrrh, and frankincense in token of His royal authority, and Mary and Nicodemus anointed Him with precious spikenard and costly spices for his priestly work of sacrifice. His name is as ointment poured forth; and He is a bundle of myrrh to the heart that loves Him. But not by the Jews alone were perfumes regarded as sacred. All over the ancient world, hundreds of years before the call of Abraham, the offering of perfumes formed a recognized and indispensable part of religious worship; and the inspired writer alludes to this circumstance when he says of the idols of the heathen, "Noses have they, but they smell not." A practice so primitive and so universal, like sacrifice itself, with which it was always associated, must originally have been enjoined by Divine authority, and handed down from the world's grey fathers to their idolatrous descendants by oral tradition. Until very recently the sweet-sedge was strewn on the floors of some of the cathedrals of England, particularly Norwich Cathedral; and exhaled when trodden a delicious fragrance, which filled the whole building as with incense. In Norway I found several of the churches where I

worshipped, decorated in a similar manner with the fresh leaves of the pine and birch, whose aromatic odour in the crowded congregation was very refreshing.

Perfumes were associated with almost every action and event in the life of the ancients. The free use of them was peculiarly delightful and refreshing to the Orientals. Their physical organization was more delicate and sensitive to external influences than ours; like well-strung harps, they vibrated to every impression from without. Not as mere luxuries or evidences of an effeminate taste, however, were perfumes employed by the Hebrews and Egyptians. The parching and scorching effect of a burning sun rendered them necessaries. They counteracted the excessive evaporation of the moisture of the body, relieved the feeling of lassitude and irritation produced by the heat, and restored vigour and elasticity to the frame. A bouquet of fragrant flowers was carried in the hand, or rooms were fumigated with the odorous vapours of burning resins, or the body was anointed with oil mixed with the aromatic qualities of some plant extracted by boiling, or scents were worn about the person in gold or silver boxes, or in alabaster vials, in which the delicious aroma was best preserved. Beds, garments, hair, and articles of furniture were perfumed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon; and so indispensable were perfumes considered to the feminine toilet, that the Talmud directs that one-tenth of a bride's dowry be set apart for their purchase. When entertainments were given, the rooms were fumigated; and it was customary for a servant to attend every guest as he

seated himself, and to anoint his head, sprinkle his person with rose-water, or apply incense to his face and beard; and so entirely was the use of perfumes on such occasions in accordance with the customs of the people, that the Saviour reproached Simon for the omission of this mark of attention, leaving it to be performed by a woman. And when death at last closed the scene, odorous drugs were employed to check the progress of corruption, and to express the affection of friends. The body was embalmed in a costly and elaborate manner; and even the cold noisome grave was made fragrant with the multitude of spices—symbols of faith which outlives that perishing, and will therefore see its resurrection—emblems of the self-sacrificing love of Him who makes all our gathered flowers to give forth a richer fragrance through dying. And it is a beautiful coincidence in connection with this custom, that Smyrna, the name of the old suffering Asiatic Church, is derived from myrrh, one of the principal gums employed in embalming the dead. The virtues and excellences of this bruised Christian Church, like aromatic spices, were to preserve it from spiritual decay, from the second death. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

The ingredients of the Hebrew perfumes were principally obtained in traffic from the Phœnicians. A few of them were products of native plants, but the great majority of them came from Arabia, India, and the spice islands of the Indian Archipelago. So great was the skill required in the mixing of these ingredients, in order to form their most valued perfumes, that the art was a

recognized profession among the Jews; and the *rokechim*, translated "apothecary" in our version, was not a seller of medicines as with us, but simply a maker of perfumes. An immense quantity was annually manufactured and consumed, of which we have a very significant indication in the fact that the holy anointing oil of the tabernacle and temple was never made in smaller quantities than 750 ounces of solids compounded with five quarts of oil, and was so profusely employed that, as we are told in Psalm cxxxiii., when applied to Aaron's head it flowed down over his beard and breast, to the very skirts of his garments. So admirable was the quality of the better and more costly kinds of perfumes, that they lasted unimpaired for hundreds of years, and many of the alabaster boxes, dug up from Egyptian tombs from two to three thousand years old, still retain fragrant traces of the ointments once contained in them.

Fragrance is not always diffused uniformly over the whole plant. Sometimes it resides in the blossom, as in the rose, the lily, the violet, and the jasmine; sometimes it is extracted from the wood, as in the sandal and cedar; from the bark, as in cinnamon and cassia; from the root, as in the iris; from the fruit, as in bergamot; from the seed, as in anise, caraway, and Tonka bean; and from the leaves, as in orange, myrtle, thyme, and mint. It depends upon volatile oils, which are often so subtle as to elude the analysis of the chemist, and cannot be imitated by artificial means. These oils are usually composed of carbon and hydrogen only; and, strange to say, these elementary bodies enter in precisely the same

proportions into the composition of scents that are widely different. Thus, for instance, the oil of lemons, of rosemary, and of the queen of the meadow, are identical in composition with each other, and all of them with the oil of turpentine; the wide difference in the qualities of these isomeric substances being, perhaps, caused by the different arrangements of the same ultimate particles. The reason why one plant is fragrant and another of the same genus utterly scentless is still involved in mystery. Indeed nothing apparently can be more capricious than the distribution of the odoriferous principle. In most plants the odour disappears at death, but some, like the rose, retain it long after; a single leaf of melilot or verbena will for centuries preserve and manifest its sweet odour without any apparent diminution. Some are scentless until withered, like the woodruff; others give out their odour only when heated by friction or burnt on the fire. Some evolve their fragrance only when the sun is shining; others, like the melancholy gilliflower and the night-blowing stock, give to the stars and the dewy hours their soul of scent, and are therefore favourite emblems of virtue smelling sweet in adversity, of sorrow fragrant with the beauty of holiness and the consolations of grace. Some exhale their richest perfume when the sun shines with strongest heat, while others require the falling dew and the gentle shower to call forth their sweetness. It has been found, on a comparison of all the members of the vegetable kingdom, that plants with white blossoms have a larger proportion of odoriferous species than any others; next in order

comes red, then yellow and blue, and lastly orange and brown, which are the least available to the perfumer, and often indeed give a disagreeable odour. Thus purity and sweetness are associated; and God has bestowed more abundant honour upon that hue which is the universal symbol of holiness and heavenliness. And this order of colour and fragrance is also the order of the seasons. The flowers of spring are white and highly fragrant; those of summer are red and yellow, but less fragrant; while those of autumn and winter exhibit the darker hues of maturity and decay, and lose the freshness and perfume of the early year. Of the natural families of plants, the lily tribe comes first in point of fragrance, then the roses, then the primroses, and lastly the campanulas or bell-flowers. In warm countries the flowers are most highly coloured, but in temperate countries they are most odoriferous; Europe having a larger proportion of sweet-smelling species than either Asia or Africa. So volatile, however, is the odoriferous principle, that it varies in strength and delicacy according to soil and climate, so that the same fragrant flower when grown in different situations exhibits different degrees of perfume. The lavender and peppermint of Surrey are far superior to those grown in France, while the violet loses a large portion of its scent among the orange and mignonette gardens of Nice, and grows sweeter as we ascend towards the slopes of the Alps.

Sweet-smelling flowers as a class are found in greatest abundance in mountain regions. A large proportion of the plants growing on the high pasturages of the Alps

are possessed of aromatic as well as medicinal properties; and I know nothing more delightful than, amid the pure exhilarating atmosphere and the boundless prospects of these lofty spots, to gaze upon the brilliant profusion of blue, crimson, and golden blossoms that carpet the ground, and to inhale their exquisite fragrance. On the Scottish mountains we have several odorous plants—such as the Alpine forget-me-not—blooming amid mists and clouds on the highest summits, and breathing from its lovely blue flowers a rich perfume. On the Andes we have the Peruvian heliotrope, whose purple eyes turn ever towards the sun, and give out an odour so sweet and ravishing that the Indians regard it as a mystic spell that opens to them the gates of the spirit world. On the Sikkim Himalayas, the tiny *Rhododendron nivale*, which grows at a loftier elevation than any other shrub in the world, scents the air with its perfumed foliage when the weather is genial. In the highest zone of the Peak of Teneriffe, far above the clouds, amid the fierce drought and unmitigated glare of that arid region, there grows a wonderful bush—found nowhere else in the world—a species of broom, called by the natives *Retama*. It is a dull dingy-looking plant in autumn, harmonizing with the dreary desolation around; but in spring it bursts out into a rich profusion of milk-white blossoms, and fills all the atmosphere with its delicious odour. Beehives are brought up to it by the peasants from the valleys; and there for a few weeks the bees revel on the nectar, and yield a highly-prized and fragrant honey. Mount Hybla, in Sicily, is covered with an immense abundance of

odoriferous flowers of all sorts; and Hymettus, a mountain in Attica, has always been celebrated in classic song for the quantity and excellence of its honey, gathered by the bees from the fragrant plants that luxuriate there. The costly spikenard of Scripture is obtained from a curious shaggy-stemmed plant called *Nardostachys Jatamansi*, a kind of valerian, growing on the lofty mountains in India, between the Ganges and the Jumna, some of which are for six months covered with snow. All these aromatic plants of the mountains require climatic circumstances for their growth, which art in most cases is incapable of supplying; and hence they cannot be cultivated with any success. When brought down into the valleys, they deteriorate, losing the brilliancy and fragrance of their blossoms—in a kind of home-sickness for the purer air and brighter light of the far-off summits.

An æsthetical link connects together sound and smell, which has been noticed by the poets of all ages. There are in all probability as many odours as there are sounds—affecting different individuals in very opposite ways; and just as in music there are different notes blending naturally and harmoniously with each other, so in fragrance there are different odours that unite together and produce different degrees of the same effect. There are perfumes in the same key as it were, forming chords and octaves of fragrance, which produce a very delightful impression upon the olfactory nerves; and the skill of the perfumer is displayed in making these harmonious combinations of different congenial odours, so as that no discordant scent shall leave a faint and sickly impression

behind, when the general perfume has died away. But not only is there an æsthetic connection between the two senses of smell and hearing; there is also a physiological one, as indeed there is between all the senses. The range of action in hearing is said to be greater than that of smell, but an object can be smelt much farther than a sound can be heard. The diffusiveness of perfumes is so great, especially in warm climates, and in the morning and evening hours, that the "odour of the balsam-yielding *Humeriades* has been perceived at a distance of three miles from the shores of South America; a species of *Tetracera* sends its perfumes as far from the island of Cuba; and the aroma of the Spice Islands is wafted out to sea."

The affinity of our senses—indicated even in our ordinary mode of speaking of scenery, music, and odours, as matters of taste, and applying the terms of one sense to another—shows to us how wonderfully versatile must be that power of the mind by which it apprehends all external nature. It also demonstrates the unity and simplicity of the mind, and convincingly proves that if, through such imperfect avenues of knowledge as our senses furnish, it can take in so large and true an idea of the world, when provided, in a higher state of existence, with an organization perfectly adapted to its capacities, it will obtain its knowledge of surrounding things directly and immediately—see no more through a glass, but face to face, and know even as it is known.

Perfumes were at one time extensively employed as remedial agents, particularly in cases of nervous disease.

They are still used freely in the sick-room, but more for the purpose of refreshment and overpowering the noxious odours of disease than as medicines. How important they are in the economy of nature we learn from the fact that when the Dutch cut down the spice trees of Ternate, that island was immediately visited with epidemics before unknown; and it has been ascertained that none of the persons employed in the perfume manufactories of London and Paris were attacked by cholera during the last visitation. From the recent experimental researches of Professor Mantegazza, we learn the important fact that the essences of flowers such as lavender, mint, thyme, bergamot, in contact with atmospheric oxygen in sunlight, develop a very large quantity of ozone, the purifying and health-inspiring element in the air. And as a corollary from this fact, he recommends the inhabitants of marshy districts, and of places infected with animal exhalations, to surround their houses with beds of the most odorous flowers, as the powerful oxidizing influence of the ozone may destroy those noxious influences. The beautiful and world-wide custom of planting graves with trees and adorning them with flowers, is for the same reason attended with valuable sanitary results. Not only is the eye cheered by their loveliness and the mind soothed by their emblematical associations, but the atmosphere is also improved; and in this we have another illustration of the great truth that what is practically wise is also poetically beautiful. Many of the most delicious perfumes, however, are dangerous in large quantities.

Taken in moderation they act as stimulants, exhilarating the mental functions, and increasing bodily vigour. But in larger and more concentrated doses they act as poisons. The odour of the queen of the meadow has sometimes proved fatal to persons who have incautiously slept with a large bouquet of this flower in their bedrooms. The peculiar odour of hayfields, due to a narcotic substance called coumarin—delightful and refreshing as it is to most people—is supposed by some medical men to be the cause of the hay-fever which prevails when this odour is most largely developed and diffused in the air; while the otto of roses is to many people sickening, and some cannot smell a rose without headache. This shows us that odours were intended to be used very sparingly. If we pursue them as pleasures for their own sake, they will soon pall upon us, however delicious; and if we concentrate them so as to produce a stronger sensation, they become actually repulsive and sickening. God has given them to us to cheer us in the path of duty, not to minister to our love of pleasure and self-indulgence; and in this respect the laws of the unwritten revelation of Nature give their sanction to the laws of the written revelation of the Bible, indicating a common source and pointing to a common issue.

From the observations I have thus made, it will be seen that no sense has a monopoly in the things of religion. Neither the ear nor the eye is exclusively fitted to promote spiritual thoughts. Every means that can rouse our emotional as well as our intellectual

nature—for religion appeals to both, and comprehends both within its sphere—is of great value, and was given for that very purpose. Constituted as we are, we cannot afford to lose even the least of the helps to devotional feeling which have been given to us so abundantly in the use of our external senses, and in the objects and symbols of nature. But here a word of caution is necessary. We must remember that, although the fragrance of nature is an æsthetical perception, it is not necessarily a religious feeling. It excites pleasurable sensations, but not pious emotions, in the unsanctified heart. Minds of the darkest and hearts of the hardest are found in scenes where every object is brimful of beauty, and every breeze is laden with perfume. It was in a region of remarkable richness and loveliness, where the scent of aromatic shrubs, unknown elsewhere in Palestine, made the air a luxury to breathe, that Sodom stood. But although fragrance cannot of itself, any more than beauty of form or colour, stir up all that is deepest in the human heart, and purify and elevate human life, it is nevertheless a powerful auxiliary to moral influences. It is melancholy to hear those who dislike the doctrines of the Cross, dwelling with fond eulogiums upon the beauties of nature, and making a gospel of them. "Consider the lilies how they grow," was the sermon of our Saviour, but it was preached to disciples; and if we are to profit by the teaching of the field, it can only be when we make it, not a *substitute* for the teaching of grace, but an *appendix* to it. If we have been taught by the Spirit, and have a living religion

in our hearts of the Spirit's kindling, then the study and enjoyment of God's works will not be a carnal, but a spiritual exercise. It will not fill our minds with temporal, but with eternal things; and the soft influences and tender ministrations of sunny hues, fair forms, and breathing sweets, will quicken instead of deadening the soul, and inspire at once greater love to God, and hatred of that sin which ruins and defiles a world so beautiful and good.

It is assuredly not without some great religious as well as æsthetic purpose that God has imparted fragrance to objects which, so far as we can see, might have done as well without it, and invested almost every phase of rural life with a perfume peculiar to itself. The toil of the farmer is insensibly sweetened by the far-wafted odour of the bean-field, and the rich honey-scent of the white clover meadow, and the agreeable healthy perfume of the melilot trefoil, the vernal grass, and the tedded hay; when he reaps his harvest he cuts down at the same time the wild mint that grows among the corn, and his sheaves are made fragrant with it. The forester is cheered by the sweet-scented woodruff, and the resinous aroma of pine and birch woods; the care of the shepherd is lightened by the warm fragrance of the heather hills and the thymy slopes; and the gardener's labour becomes a pleasure when perfumed with the loving breath of a thousand beautiful flower-lips. Not without deep spiritual significance to man does the honeysuckle blow from its golden trumpets a fragrant music; or the vesper lychnis exhale its soul of sweetness in the dewy fields

when twilight and peace descend hand in hand together from heaven; or the milk-white thorn load the air with fragrant memories of the long summer days of childhood. All this Eden-breathing perfume of nature is doubtless intended to lead our thoughts to God, and win us from the earthly things that have bewitched us with their sorceries. Jesus taught us to prize these beautiful chalices of field and wood for the sake of the holy thoughts, of which the heart is the interpreter, that breathe from out their odorous loveliness. He renewed the primeval blessing upon them. He consecrated them with the oil of His own admiration, for the service of that temple where everything speaks of His glory. And if life should be a perpetual sacrament since He brake the daily bread of it in His hands, the fragrant breath of nature should be to us a perpetual incense rising up on the earth's great altar, reminding us of that marvellous Love that so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son a sacrifice for it. Each odour should be a tender voice calling to us from every blossom and leaf, to join in creation's worship as represented in symbol before the throne by the four living creatures: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

> "There's not a flower of spring,
> That dies ere June, but vaunts itself allied
> By issue and symbol, by significance
> And correspondence, to the spirit-world
> Outside the limits of our time and space,
> Whereto we are bound."

CHAPTER III.

LEPROSY OF HOUSE AND GARMENTS.

"When ye be come into the land of Canaan, which I give to you for a possession, and I put the plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possession: and he that owneth the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, It seemeth to me there is as it were a plague in the house."—LEVITICUS xiv. 34, 35.

"And if the plague be greenish or reddish in the garment, or in the skin, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in anything of skin; it is a plague of leprosy, and shall be shewed unto the priest."—LEVITICUS xiii. 49.

FEW subjects have proved more perplexing to the student of Scripture than the title of this chapter. That human dwellings and garments should exhibit a similar disease to that which infects the human body, seems at first sight to be in the highest degree improbable. Sceptics, taking advantage of this improbability, have used it as an argument against the historical veracity of the Mosaic record. They have regarded it as either a mythical circumstance altogether, or as an ignorant and superstitious exaggeration of some ordinary occurrence, worthy only of ridicule or contempt. Commentators, in their endeavours to meet these objections, have been

sorely driven to find some plausible explanation of the phenomenon. All sorts of conjectures have been hazarded, some of them very wide indeed of the mark. Michaelis has suggested that the leprosy of the house arose from a nitrous efflorescence produced on the surface of the stone by saltpetre; and mentions, in corroboration of this idea, a case that came under his own observation, of a house in Lübeck, whose walls were covered with this substance, which bore a strong resemblance to leprous patches. This efflorescence, however, did not exhibit the remarkable reddish and greenish spots described by Moses; and, therefore, the explanation of Michaelis must be rejected as inapplicable. The same writer attributed the leprosy of garments to the appearances assumed by clothes woven of wool taken from sheep which had died of a particular disease, and worn and fretted into holes. But this explanation falls short of the case, for not only woollen garments, but also those made of linen and leather, as well as bottles and any article made of skin, were subject to the same appearances. Other authors, with more plausibility, have supposed the phenomenon in question to be simply the taint or contagion of bodily leprosy imparted to the clothes of the patient. It is, indeed, an unquestionable truth, that in contagious diseases infection is conveyed by the garments of the diseased; but in the case before us we are not at liberty to suppose that the leprous garments were actually worn by lepers; and even although they had been so worn, the taint of leprosy could not have been visible in greenish or reddish streaks. The opinion that

it was a chemical effect produced by some imperfection in the process of bleaching or dyeing, or that it was the festering stain caused by damp and want of ventilation, which, when fairly established, mouldered and ultimately reduced the cloth to pieces, is equally untenable, because it does not answer fully the conditions of the Mosaic description. All these conjectures, instead of shedding light upon the subject, have only made it darker and more mysterious.

We are indebted to the recent discoveries of the microscope for the first intimation of the true nature of the leprosy of house and garments. In this instance, as in many others, the historical truth of the Bible is confirmed by the very circumstance that seemed to militate most against it; and even in its minutest details and accounts of subsidiary phenomena, we find that it is wonderfully accurate not merely according to a popular but even to a philosophical standard. The cavils and objections of science, falsely so called, are removed by the revelations of a more advanced science; and the truths of nature and of the Bible are found to be one, as God is one, and therefore as incapable of quenching each other as one ray of light is incapable of quenching another. A careful examination of the Levitical narrative in the light of modern science leaves no room to doubt that the conclusions of Sommer, Kurtz, and other recent authors, who attribute a *vegetable* origin to this plague, are correct. The characteristics mentioned are such as can belong only to plants. There are some species of fungi which could have produced all the effects described, and whose form and colour answer

admirably to the appearances presented by the leprosy. We are therefore safe in believing that the phenomena in question were caused by fungi. The language of Moses is evidently popular, not scientific, and may therefore be supposed to include not only different species, but even different genera and orders of fungi as concerned in the production of the effects described. In the following pages I shall attribute the different appearances to what I believe to be their specific causes, and arrange my remarks under the two heads of—first, the leprosy of the house; and second, the leprosy of garments.

The leprosy of the house consisted of reddish and greenish patches. The reddish patches on the wall were in all likelihood caused by the presence of a fungus, well known under the common name of *dry-rot*, and called by botanists *Merulius lachrymans*. Builders have often painful evidence of the virulent and destructive nature of this scourge. It is frequent all the year round, being in this respect different from other fungi, which are usually confined to the season of decay. It does not affect one locality or object, but is universal and indiscriminate in its attacks. The situations where it occurs most frequently, however, are the inside of wainscoting, the hollow trunks of trees, the timber of ships, and the floors and beams of buildings. The conditions favourable for its growth and development are moisture, warmth, and stagnant air, and where these exist it is almost sure to appear. Most people are acquainted with the effects of this fungus, but its form and appearance are familiar to only a few. At first it makes its presence

known by a few delicate white threads which radiate from a common centre, and resemble a spider's web. Gradually these threads become thicker and closer, coalescing more and more, until at last they form a dense cottony cushion of yellowish-white colour and roundish shape. The size of this vegetable cushion varies from an inch to eight inches in diameter, according as it has room to develop itself and is supplied with the appropriate pabulum. Hundreds of such sponge-like cushions may be seen in places infected by the disease oozing out through interstices in the floor or wall. At a later stage of growth, the fungus develops over its whole surface a number of fine orange or reddish-brown veins, forming irregular folds, most frequently so arranged as to have the appearance of pores, and distilling, when perfect, drops of water, whence its specific name of *lachrymans*, or weeping. When fully matured it produces an immense number of rusty seeds, so minute as to be invisible to the naked eye, which are diffused throughout the atmosphere, and are ever ready to alight and germinate in suitable circumstances. If once established, dry-rot spreads with amazing rapidity, destroying the best houses in a very short time. The law regarding it in Leviticus is founded upon this property; seven days only were allowed for its development, so that its true nature might be placed beyond doubt. "Then the priest shall go out of the house to the door of the house, and shut up the house seven days: and the priest shall come again the seventh day and shall look, and behold if the plague be spread in the walls of the house," &c.

The precautions here adopted are in entire accordance with the nature and habits of fungi. By emptying the house of its furniture, shutting the doors and windows, and excluding air and light, the very conditions were provided in which the dry-rot would luxuriate and come to maturity. If the walls were completely impregnated with its seeds and spawn, this short period of trial would amply suffice to show the fact, and the building might then safely be condemned to undergo a process of purification. The effect which dry-rot produces upon timber is to render it useless by destroying its elasticity and toughness, so that it cannot resist any pressure, and gradually crumbles away into dry brown dust. So virulent is its nature that it extends from the wood-work of a house even to the walls, and, by insinuating itself between the bricks or stones, vegetates through the whole structure, and reduces it to a damp and mouldering state. There are no means of restoring rotten timber to a sound condition, and the dry-rot can only be eradicated by removing the decayed and affected parts, clearing away all the spawn, and destroying the germs with which the plaster and the other materials of the walls may have been impregnated. For this purpose the processes of kyanizing and burnetizing have been recommended—that is, washing the walls or the wood-work with a strong solution of corrosive sublimate or chloride of zinc. If the dry-rot is not fairly established in a house, it may be removed with tolerable ease by these processes; should the disease, however, have become wide-spread and deep-seated, no means of

dealing with the evil can be depended upon, except that of removing altogether the corrupted and contagious matter, and admitting a free circulation of air. This was exactly what the Jewish priest was commanded to do: "Then the priest shall command that they take away the stones in which the plague is, and they shall cast them into an unclean place without the city: and he shall cause the house to be scraped within round about, and they shall pour out the dust that they scrape off without the city into an unclean place: and they shall take other stones and put them in the place of those stones; and he shall take other mortar, and shall plaster the house." It often happens, however, that even this severe operation proves ineffectual; and after repeated repairs of the same nature, it is found that the building is so hopelessly ruined that it must be abandoned and dismantled: "And if the plague come again, and break out in the house, after that he hath taken away the stones, and after he hath scraped the house, and after it is plastered; then the priest shall come and look, and, behold, if the plague be spread in the house, it is a fretting leprosy in the house: it is unclean. And he shall break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house; and he shall carry them forth out of the city into an unclean place." In confirmation of this Professor Burnet says:—"I knew a house in which the rot gained admittance, and which, during the four years we rented it, had the parlours twice wainscoted, and a new flight of stairs, the dry-rot having rendered it unsafe to go from the ground-floor to

the bed-rooms. Every precaution was taken to remove the decaying timbers when the new work was done; yet the dry-rot so rapidly gained strength that the house was ultimately pulled down. Some of my books, which suffered least, and which I still retain, bear mournful impressions of its ruthless hand; others were so much affected that the leaves resemble tinder, and when the volumes were opened fell out in dust or fragments." The ships in the Crimea suffered more from dry-rot than from the ravages of fire or the shot and shells of the enemy; and many of the best and most solid-looking houses are rendered year after year uninhabitable by it. The wood is often deeply impregnated with its spawn before it is used; the green patches that frequently occur in the grain of the wood piled up in the timber-yards being indications of its presence. When exposed to the elements, the spawn is prevented from developing; but when the wood in which it is seen is employed in domestic buildings, and shut up in close ill-ventilated places, it speedily reveals its true nature, and spreads like wild-fire.

If the ravages of this plague are so great in this country, where the climate is temperate, and the houses generally dry, well-drained, and substantially built, what must they be in Eastern countries, where the dwellings are hastily constructed of almost any materials that come readily to hand—of loose stones daubed with untempered mortar—of mud and sun-burnt bricks mingled with chopped straw—and where the climate, especially during the rainy season, is very close and moist, developing

every kind of cryptogamic vegetation in the utmost luxuriance? Dr. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book," mentions that the upper rooms of the houses in Palestine, if not constantly ventilated, become quickly covered with mould, and are unfit to live in. In many cases the roofs of the houses are little better than earth rolled hard, and it is by no means uncommon to see grass springing into a short-lived existence upon them. Such habitations must be damp and peculiarly subject to the infection of fungi. During the months of November and December especially, fungi make their appearance in the wretched ephemeral abodes of the poorer classes; and in the walls of many a dwelling at the present day may be seen the same leprous appearances described by Moses three thousand years ago. When the Israelites entered Palestine, they occupied the dwellings of the dispossessed aboriginal inhabitants, instead of building new houses for themselves. And in these dwellings, as the Canaanites lived in the midst of moral and physical impurity, and were moreover ignorant of all sanitary conditions, the plague of leprosy would be very apt to manifest itself. The Bible speaks of it as sent expressly by God himself: "When ye be come into the land of Canaan, which I give to you for a possession, and *I put* the plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possession." It was so sent in mercy and not in judgment, to show to them, by a palpable proof appealing to the eye, what could not be so well revealed by other evidence. It was the visible manifestation of a hidden insidious unwholesomeness; the breaking out, as it were, of an

internal and universal disease. It directed attention to the unhealthy character of the house, and stimulated inquiry as to how it could be remedied. Whereas if no such abnormal appearance presented itself, the inhabitants might remain unconsciously in the midst of conditions which would slowly but surely undermine their health, and in the end prove fatal.

In the Levitical narrative we read that in the walls of the affected houses there were *greenish* as well as reddish streaks. These greenish streaks were caused by a much humbler kind of fungus than the *Merulius lachrymans*, or dry-rot, concerned in the production of the reddish streaks. Every one is familiar with the common *green mould*, or *Penicillium glaucum* of botanists. This fungus is extremely abundant everywhere, and seems to have been no less general in the ancient world, for we find traces of it pretty frequently in amber, mixed with fragments of lichens and mosses. It grows on all kinds of decaying substances, and is very protean in its appearance, assuming different forms according to the nature of the body or situation which it affects. To the naked eye it is a mere greenish downy crust spreading over a decaying surface; but under the microscope it presents a singularly lovely spectacle. The little patch of dusty cobweb is transformed into a fairy forest of the most exquisite shapes. Hundreds of delicate, transparent stalks rise up from creeping interlacing roots of snowy purity, crowned with bundles of slender hairs, each like a miniature painter's brush. Interspersed among these hairs, which under a higher power of the microscope are

seen to be somewhat intricately branched, occur greenish dust-like particles, which are the *sporidia*, or seed-cases, containing in their interior the excessively minute and impalpable spores or germs by which the species is perpetuated. A more entrancing sight cannot be seen than these Liliputian groves of fungoid vegetation spreading over a decaying crust of bread, or a damp, mouldy old shoe, or the surface of a neglected pot of preserves. Often when coming home, wearied and surfeited by the inexhaustible enjoyments of a summer ramble, has my sense of God's power and love been revived and quickened by the microscopic examination of a fragment of rubbish thrown away into some dark corner; and I have felt constrained to acknowledge that the glories of the outer world of sense and sight, illuminated by the summer sun, sank into insignificance when compared with the *spirituelle* vegetation which bloomed unseen beyond the reach of sunshine and dew, and covered with its mantle of loveliness the unsightly ravages of death and decay. I have gazed for hours unweariedly upon such astonishing miracles of nature wrought within the precincts of man's own home, finding new proofs of design, new charms of hue and form and grouping, disclosing themselves every moment. Many of the strange weird-looking trees seemed to be growing as I gazed, lengthening their stalks upwards and spreading their roots downwards; here and there tree-stems falling, and crushing others in their fall, opening up a glade in the forest, and cumbering the ground with their fallen trunks and old rotten-looking stumps; while ever

and anon the ripe capsules which grew on the summits of the taller and more mature plants were bursting, and sending their seeds like a tiny puff of white smoke into the still air. There was an exquisite finish and perfection of detail in every part. Products of decay although they were, each object was instinct with life, and busy in the performance of life's functions. It was the fable of the Phœnix more than realized—purity springing out of corruption, and the shadow of death turned into the morning.

The common mould-plant has wonderful powers of adapting itself to circumstances the most diverse. Though it grows most frequently in the air, it is no less at home in the water. The vinegar plant which excited so much attention in domestic circles a few years ago, was an extraordinary development in saccharine solutions of the vegetative system or spawn of the common mould. Under the microscope, the peculiar gelatinous or leathery appearance of this abnormal production was found to consist of the threads of the mould closely interlaced and greatly swollen; and whenever the vinegar in which it was immersed was allowed to evaporate, and the spawn to become free from saturation, then the usual form of the mould was produced. Similar examples may be seen in the flocculent matter which forms in various effusions when they become mothery; and in warm weather every writer is familiar with the tough mass that is so often brought up on the point of the pen from the ink-holder. Yeast, too, consists of the cells of this fungus. When placed in the juice of grapes or the juice of barley

these vegetable cells begin to grow and propagate, causing minute bubbles of carbonic gas to arise, and the whole substance gradually to ferment. A single cubic inch of yeast during the heat of fermentation contains upwards of eleven hundred and fifty-two millions of these primitive plants. When the sugar upon which they feed is exhausted, and the water is all evaporated to dryness, the yeast-plants return to their primitive form of common green mould. We thus see that the same fungus which grows on the decayed grape in the vineyard, or the mildewed barley in the harvest-field, converts, in the form of yeast, the juices of the grape and the barley into wine and beer. In both cases it is a process at once of decay and growth. Nature by means of the growth of the fungus is hastening the decay of effete substances; man steps in and arrests the decay and growth at a particular point, and employs the product as a beverage.

So also it is with leaven or the fermenting matter which, in baking bread, is put into the dough to make it lighter and more tasteful. It consists of myriads of the cells of the common mould in an undeveloped state. If a fragment of the dough with the leaven in it be put aside in a shady place, the cells of the fungus in the leaven will vegetate, and cover the dough with a slight downy substance, which is just the plant in its complete form. The swelling of the dough, and the commotion which goes on in the leavened mass, are owing to the multiplication of the plant-cells, which takes place with astonishing rapidity. By this process of vegetation, the starch and sugar of the dough are converted into other

chemical products. But it is only allowed to go a certain length, and then the principle of growth is checked by placing the dough in the oven and baking it into bread. Leaven is thus a principle of destruction and construction—of decay and of growth—of death and of life. It has two effects which are made use of as types in Scripture. On the one side, the operation of leaven upon meal presents an analogy to something evil in the spiritual world, for it decays and decomposes the matter with which it comes into contact. On the other side, the operation of leaven upon meal presents an analogy to something good in the spiritual world, for it is a principle of life and growth, and imparts a new energy and a beneficent quality to the matter with which it comes into contact. Hence we see why Christ, at one and the same time, should bid His disciples beware of the leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees, and compare the kingdom of heaven to leaven hid in three measures of meal. The Kingdom of Heaven, we must remember, has two aspects,—it is a principle of growth and decay, of construction and destruction; it is life unto life in those who have life, it is death unto death in those who are dead. Nay, in the same person it is at one and the same time a principle of life and of death, of growth and decay, for the new man lives by the death of the old man; the spiritual life grows while the carnal life decays; the outward man perisheth, while the inward man is renewed more and more.

Common mould grows on every substance, whether animal or vegetable, in a state of decay. It grows

even upon the human body when it is in an enfeebled or disordered condition; and many diseases of the skin are owing to its efforts to develop and spread itself. The thrush in children, the muscardine so destructive to silk-worms, the fungoid growth which so often causes the death of the common house-fly in autumn, are all different forms of the common mould. Its germs or spores are constantly floating in the air or swimming in the water in incalculable myriads, so that it is difficult to conceive how any place can be free from their presence. The atmosphere of our houses is loaded with them; and were we endowed with microscopic vision, we should see them dancing about in the draughts and currents of our rooms, or shining among the motes in the pencilled rays of sunshine. The ubiquity of mould has given rise to the theory of spontaneous generation, still held by a certain class of naturalists; but the immense profusion of its seeds, and their wonderful powers of adaptability to varying circumstances, and of entering through the finest conceivable apertures, will easily account for its presence in every situation, without being under the necessity of admitting what has never yet been proved—that substances in a particular state of decay can, without seeds or germs of any kind, generate low forms of life. Many medical men are of opinion that various zymotic diseases, if not originated, are increased by the presence of these minute cellules in the blood, and by their deleterious action in developing themselves. The subject has recently been made popular by the discoveries of Professor Tyndal and the fears excited by his theory of germs.

The injuries inflicted by fungi are indeed incalculable. But we have nevertheless a grand compensation in the benefits which they confer in accelerating, by their unparalleled rapidity of growth, the process of decay, and removing from the atmosphere into their own tissues, where they are innocuous, the putrescent effluvia of dead substances. They also economize the stock of organized material, which has been slowly and tediously gained from the earth, air, and water, by preventing it from going back through decomposition to the mineral state, and preserving it in an organic form to be at once made available for the purposes of higher animal and plant life. Mould, for these reasons, is not so much an evil in itself as an indication of evil conditions in the world, and by minimising these it renders an all-important service in the economy of nature. Its great purpose is purely benevolent; but, like the storm intended to purify the atmosphere, it sometimes oversteps its limits, and proves injurious in particular cases.

Light, indispensable to the well-being of all other plants, is hostile to the growth of fungi. Wherever the sun shines brightly, mould will not appear, or, at all events, flourish. It is essentially one of the unfruitful works of darkness. Hence those dwellings where the direct sunlight is excluded are peculiarly exposed to its attacks. However clean the locality, and comfortable the external appearance of a house, if the windows are small and the ceilings low, and little light be admitted, this morbid vegetable growth will make its appearance; and by its rapid spread indicate very plainly that what is favourable to its develop-

ment is most depressing and devitalizing to the inmates. Eastern houses especially, owing to the jealous seclusion in which the occupiers live, and the heat and glare of the climate, are constructed to admit as little light as possible; and therefore we may well suppose that their shaded rooms would be injurious to health and favourable to the growth of leprous moulds. God said, "Let there be light;" and He said it for a wise and beneficent purpose: for purifying the atmosphere as well as beautifying the earth. It helps on the life of the world; it is an essential condition of animated nature; it is the best and cheapest of nature's tonics; and wherever it is prevented from exerting its benign influence, the body is weakened, the atmosphere is vitiated, the dwelling becomes the scene of disease and decay, and the dark haunt of noxious vegetation. Perfumes are also injurious to fungi. It is a remarkable circumstance that mouldiness is effectually prevented, at least during its incipient stages, by almost any fragrant substance. It is well known that books will not become mouldy in the neighbourhood of Russia leather; nor any substance if placed within the influence of some essential oil. Turpentine, Canada balsam, tar, and other resinous substances, have not unfrequently proved effective when administered as remedies in diseases of vegetable origin. Cholera has never visited the extensive pine-forests of Norway and Sweden; and in the district of the Spey in Scotland, where there are great woods of pine and fir, diphtheria—which is supposed to be caused by the development of fungoid germs—is altogether unknown. It is for this

reason probably, that cedar-wood occupies so prominent a place in the list of articles to be used in disinfecting the leprosy of the house. "And he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, and with the running water, and with the living bird, and with the cedar-wood, and with the hyssop, and with the scarlet; but he shall let go the living bird out of the city into the open fields, and make an atonement for the house; and it shall be clean." Though the articles of purification here enumerated were employed on account of their typical or symbolical significance, yet it does not follow from this, that there was not a real fitness in the nature of things, in the various applications. The resinous fragrance of the cedar-wood, in cases where there was only a slight mouldiness in the house, would act as a deodorizing agent, apart altogether from its typical purport or spiritual efficacy. It is important to notice that light and free circulation of air, as symbolized by the living bird let loose into the free sunlit sky, and sweet and healthy perfumes arising from thorough cleanliness, as symbolized by the hyssop, the running water, and the cedar-wood, form the rational basis of the spiritual typology of the ceremony; and all this is not without profound significance to us upon whom the ends of the world are come.

The minute regulations for inspecting and cleansing those houses where symptoms of leprosy appeared, indicate how complete was the sanitary system under which the ancient Israelites lived. God considered no part of their domestic and social economy, however humble,

beneath His notice. Cleanliness in person, in dress, in dwellings, and in all outward appointments, was enforced by statutes of a peculiarly solemn character. All these ceremonial enactments were in the first instance intended for sanitary purposes. God had respect to the physical health and well-being of His people. He wished them to be patterns of purity, models of beauty, their bodies to be perfectly developed in the midst of the most favourable circumstances; and therefore the most admirable arrangements were made for securing cleanly, orderly, and healthy habitations. In this respect the ancient Jews were far in advance of us. In too many of our dwellings, the truths of modern sanative science are wholly ignored. A frightfully large proportion of our population, not only in crowded cities, but also in lonely rural districts, live in the midst of conditions that are most pernicious to health and physical development. Fever never leaves certain localities; and whole hecatombs of victims to epidemic diseases are annually sacrificed through sheer ignorance of the simplest laws of physiology. To remedy this wretched hygienic condition of the masses of our fellow-creatures is the great question of the day; but it is one beset with many and formidable difficulties. Still it is encouraging to know that, as a nation, we have begun in some measure to address ourselves to an undertaking so vitally important. We have now, fortunately, many associations instituted specially for the prosecution of it; and efforts for the good of men's bodies are felt to be as really and directly Christian work, as efforts

for the enlightenment of the mind and the salvation of the soul.

But not for purely physical purposes alone were the Levitical laws regarding the leprosy of the house enforced. They had also a spiritual significance. God dwelt among the Israelites: the tabernacle was His visible abode. He had thus come down to earth; and the Israelites lived in His presence as it were in heaven, under the conditions of earth. The state which is future to us was present to them; and hence, all the promises and threatenings addressed to them under the theocracy concerned this life and this earth alone. The solemn announcement was made to them, "The Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy; that He see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee." Physical pollution was regarded as the symbol of spiritual pollution; and everything connected with disease, decay, or death, imparted a symbolical defilement to a spot wherein nothing that defileth should be found. God was to be known, not as the God of the dead, but of the living; and therefore every morbid substance, animal or vegetable—everything that was hostile to health, and bore upon it the impress of that curse whose course is disease and decay, and whose end is death—must be banished without the camp. He was, moreover, to be known as the thrice Holy One, who cannot look upon sin; and therefore every unfruitful work of darkness—every token in man's body and surroundings of the deep

lying malady of sin in his soul—everything that bore the image of corruption—must be excluded from the precincts which He has sanctified by His own habitation, and from the dwellings of the people upon whom He has put His name. All experience tells us of the mysterious connection, founded upon the constitution of our two fold nature, between physical and moral evil—between external and internal impurity. The proverb, "Cleanliness is next to godliness," is truer even than it is admitted to be. Physical filth has in innumerable instances been the means of turning away the Lord from the homes of those who endure it. For want of a little more room and a little more purity in their dwellings, the sublimest truths fall dead upon the ears of thousands. The salvation of the poor, though to them the Gospel is preached, is in very many cases rendered impossible, humanly speaking, on account of the degrading conditions amid which they live, and the deadening, hardening influence which familiarity with noxious sights and smells produces. How often are the spiritual instructions of the district visitor thrown away on account of the unhallowed effects of filthy surroundings! Let our efforts for the souls of our fellow-creatures, therefore, be introduced and accompanied, like those of our Saviour, by some measure of attention to their physical well-being: remembering that the Gospel is universal, comprehending the whole man; that Christ; as the apostle tells us, is the Saviour of the body; and that we are now waiting for the adoption—that is, the redemption of the body.

Sad it is to think of the leprosy of the house being the type of the leprosy of sin which infects the earthly tabernacle of this body. We bear about with us this plague in all our members. From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, there is no soundness in us. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. In vain do we endeavour to check its spread, to diminish its ravages, by efforts at self-reformation, by repairing and altering this and that part of our structure which it has corrupted and decayed. So virulent is its nature, so inherent and deep-seated are its roots, that we cannot altogether get quit of it. Even the holiest Christian has a law in his members warring against the law of his mind; and the bitter cry, "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" often proceeds from the meekest and saintliest lips. The earthly house of this tabernacle must be taken to pieces, must crumble in the dust, and be resolved into its native elements, ere the ingrained, fretting leprosy of sin be completely eradicated, and it be in a fit condition to be rebuilt, and made a pure and holy mansion for the redeemed and glorified spirit. Blessed be God, our vile bodies are yet to be fashioned like unto the glorious body of our Redeemer; and here and now the happy work of purification and transformation may be going on through the blood of the Lamb, the water of regeneration, and the fragrant, sanctifying influences of Divine grace. Be it ours to put our natures entirely under the purifying power of God's Spirit, so that they may be cleansed from all impure and unholy desires, all in-

ordinate indulgences of lawful appetite, all the fretting leprosy of the flesh; and grow up temples of the Holy Ghost, habitations of God through the Spirit, fitted for their sacred ministrations here and their glorious enjoyments hereafter.

So much for the leprosy of the house. The leprosy of garments may have been caused by the same fungi. Precisely the same appearances manifested themselves in the one case as in the other. I am disposed to attribute the greenish streaks on the garments to the common green mould; for, as I have observed, it is ubiquitous, and grows as readily on clothes as on house walls, when left in damp, ill-ventilated, ill-lighted places. The reddish patches, however, seem to me to have been produced by the growth of the *Sporendonema*, or *red mould*, very common on cheese; or of the *Palmella prodigiosa*. This last-mentioned plant is occasionally found on damp walls in shady places, and on various articles of dress and food, sometimes extending itself over a considerable area. It is usually a gelatinous mass, of the colour and general appearance of coagulated blood, whence it has received the famous name of *Gory-dew*. Though formerly ranked with the algæ, or sea-weed family, it is now ascertained, by more accurate physiological researches, to be a species of mould; so that, under whatever names we may class them, the plants which occasioned the strange appearances on houses and garments belong to the same tribe. Instances of reddish patches suddenly investing linen and woollen clothes, are by no means confined to

the Levitical narrative. A whole volume might be filled with similar examples. Along with other marvellous prodigies, they abound in the mediæval chronicles; and were they not authenticated by the most trustworthy evidence, we should hesitate—from their very extraordinary character—to accept them as true. It was by no means rare to find, in the middle ages, consecrated wafers and priestly vestments sprinkled with a minute red substance like blood. Such abnormal appearances were called *signacula*, as tokens of the Saviour's living body; and pilgrimages were not unfrequently made to witness them. In several cases the Jews were suspected, on account of their abhorrence of Christianity, of having caused sacramental hosts to bleed, and were, therefore, ruthlessly tormented and put to death in large numbers. Upwards of ten thousand were slaughtered at Rotil, near Frankfort, in 1296, for this reason. The bleeding of the host, produced in consequence of the scepticism of the officiating priest, gave rise to the miracle of Bolsena, in 1264; the priest's garment stained with this bloody looking substance being preserved until recent times as a relic. This gave rise to the festival of the Corpus Christi founded by Urban IV. Dr. D'Aubigné gives the following extraordinary account of a similar phenomenon, which happened during the Reformation. "On the 26th of July, a widow chancing to be alone in her house, in the village of Castelenschloss, suddenly beheld a frightful spectacle—blood springing from the earth all around her; she rushes in alarm into the cottage . . . but, oh, horrible! blood is flowing everywhere, from the earth,

from the wainscot, and from the stones; it falls in a stream from a basin on a shelf, and even the child's cradle overflows with it. The woman imagines that the invisible hand of an assassin has been at work, and rushes in distraction out of doors, crying 'Murder! murder!' The villagers and the monks of a neighbouring convent assemble at the noise; they partly succeed in effacing the bloody stains; but a little later in the day, the other inhabitants of the house, sitting down in terror to eat their evening meal under the projecting eaves, suddenly discover blood bubbling up in a pond, blood flowing from the loft, blood covering all the walls of the house. Blood, blood, everywhere blood! The bailiff of Schenkenberg and the pastor of Dalheim arrive, inquire into the matter, and immediately report it to the Lords of Berne and Zwingle." M. Montagne relates that a red parasite attacked all kinds of alimentary substances at the Château du Parquet in July 1852. "The servants," he observes, "much astonished at what they saw, brought us half a fowl roasted the previous evening, which was literally covered with a gelatinous layer of a very intense carmine red. A cut melon also exhibited some traces of it. Some cooked cauliflower which had been thrown away also presented the same appearance." Before the potato-blight broke out in 1846, red mould spots appeared on wet linen surfaces exposed to the air in bleaching-greens, as well as on household linen kept in damp places, in Ireland. In September 1848, Dr. Eckard, of Berlin, while attending a cholera patient, observed the same production

on a plate of potatoes which had been placed in a cupboard in the patient's house. All these instances—and hundreds more might be enumerated—though somewhat exaggerated by the dilated eye of fear, were found by microscopic investigation to be caused by the extraordinary development in abnormal circumstances of the red mould. Occurring, as most of them did, before the outbreak of epidemics, which they were supposed to herald, they obviously point to the conclusion that they were developed by unhealthy conditions of the atmosphere. In ordinary times, but few of the fungi which caused these alarming appearances are produced, and then only in obscure and isolated localities; but their seeds lie around us in immense profusion, waiting but the recurrence of similar atmospheric conditions as existed in former times, to exhibit as extraordinary a development.

"O Lord, how manifold are Thy works; in wisdom hast Thou made them all!" is the thought that arises in the devout soul at the contemplation of the wonderful structure and history of these minute existences, which live and die unknown to the great majority of mankind. No one has a right to despise these objects which, by a false human standard, we are accustomed to call insignificant. Such an epithet is not applicable to anything that God has made and adapted to His own designs. Even a mould, requiring the highest powers of the miscroscope for its examination, can become in His hands a mighty scourge or a transcendent benefit. The minutest organism which obeys His laws, tends to His

glory; and the study of it fills us with adoring awe, as well as enables us to improve our condition in the world. Most important are the lessons which the humblest of all plants teach us. They show us how hurtful things can be rendered harmless, and natural mischief neutralized. Their own appearance is an indication of the law of purity which pervades all creation. Pure as the snow-flake from the cloud so dark—pure as the lily from mud so vile—pure as the duck-weed on the stagnant ditch—their slender stems and graceful fruitage spring from foul-smelling and decaying rubbish. They utilize and convert into their own beautiful forms, the corrupting substances that are defiling and destroying God's fair world. They thus teach us that the only way in which we can render the waste materials of life innoxious, is to use them and make them serve us. The sewage of our towns, and the refuse of our houses, will prove deleterious to us, and be the constant source of disease, unless we make them subservient to the increase of the means of life, the fertilizing of our fields, and the production of our food. "Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost," is a command in nature as in grace, which we disobey at our own peril—for the only condition of organic waste ceasing to be an evil is that it shall become a good. The leprosy of garments speaks to us too, like all the impurities of earth, of the defilement of sin. Our own righteousness is as filthy rags. Our own garment of good deeds and feelings is mouldy, and ingrained with the greenish and reddish streaks of uncleanness. The mildewed garment of the flesh clings

to us like Dejanira's robe, and poisons all the springs of our life. The righteousness of Christ alone is the pure linen, clean and white, without speck of decay, or stain of sin. He invites us to buy of Him white raiment that we may be clothed, and that the shame of our nakedness may not appear; to wash our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. *Putting on* the Lord Jesus Christ first in justification, and then in daily life, all our garments will smell of myrrh and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made us glad, and thus effectually hinder by their fragrance the morbid leprous growth of sin. And if, like the saints of Sardis, we do not defile our *garments of grace*, which are so easily stained by the pollutions of a world lying in wickedness; if we keep ourselves unspotted from the world, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh, then we shall walk in the heavenly mansions with Christ in white, in *garments of glory*, which are incapable of receiving a stain—which cannot be infected with the leprosy of sin any more—being a portion of the inheritance which is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

CHAPTER IV.

STONES CRYING OUT.

"I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."—LUKE xix. 40.

OUR Lord's rebuke to the envious Pharisees, who would have silenced the "Hosannas" of the disciples during His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, is, on the face of it, a mere metaphor,—a mere poetical personification. It was simply meant to convey, in the most forcible manner, the idea that it was impossible for those whose hearts were filled with a new-born, overpowering sense of the Messiah's glory, to restrain the outward expression of it,—as impossible as it would be for stones to speak. Doubtless in this sense alone it was understood by the multitude. But the words of our Lord have a deeper meaning than appears on the surface, and a wider application than to the immediate circumstance that called them forth. They are the words of Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. They open the door to an almost infinite exegesis in the line of their own thought. When a subtle critic detects some hidden

beauty in the writings of Dante, Goethe, or Milton, we are apt to say that the writer did not mean it—that it is a mere reflection of the critic's own thought; but, as Archdeacon Hare says, if the beauty is there, his genius meant it, however insensibly to himself: for the true poet, like the inspired prophet, always says more than he means, more even than he understands. Working in unison with nature and truth, he is sure to be far mightier and wiser than himself; his words have an assimilative power,—like the growth of a seed which brings materials together from heaven and earth for its development, or the gathering of beautiful crystals, each to its own, round little specks or threads, in a solution. Now what the poet does unconsciously, our Lord did consciously. All that He said and did connected itself with the wide universe by innumerable associations, and, passing beyond its immediate purpose and apparent purport, formed part of the absolute truth.

Taking this warrantable view of our Lord's words in general, the particular hyperbolical expression uttered by Him on the occasion referred to, seems to me to contain a profound and far-reaching truth—to disclose the true meaning and design of the inorganic world. The Word who uttered the words in question was the same Word who created the world, and without whom was not anything made that was made. He must therefore have fully known the utmost significance of His own sayings,—all that the stones symbolized and were made to express in their own mute language of signs. And if we can find in His utterances hidden

analogies that are mutually harmonious and consistent with the general scheme of nature and of grace, we are at liberty, I think, to accept them as true interpretations,—as meant, if not literally and directly by our Saviour, at least by His infinite wisdom. If the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world, the inorganic substances which were the first created objects, —which lie at the very foundation of all things,—must testify of His redemptive work.

The stones which probably attracted our Lord's eye as He rode over them in the pathway from Bethany to Jerusalem, were more than usually suggestive of thoughtful reflection. There were indeed sermons in these stones which he who ran might read. The Mount of Olives, in common with the greater part of Palestine and Northern Egypt, is composed of cretaceous and nummulitic limestone, abounding in caverns, and forming the sources of numerous springs. This formation is entirely of animal origin; every grain of these vast masses once passed through the tissues and formed part of the structure of living creatures. The Mount of Olives is but the sepulchre of myriads of curious and often beautiful forms of life that formerly existed in tertiary seas, of which the Dead Sea, the Mediterranean, and the Red Sea are but isolated fragments. Its general aspect forcibly suggests the theory of the bed of an ocean abounding with the remains of extinct shells, gradually left dry, and by some slow and vast operation upheaved in horizontal or slightly inclined beds, afterwards worn away into mountains and valleys by extensive

denudation. Of the same material the most famous of the Pyramids is formed; its characteristic fossils, called by the Arabs "Pharaoh's beans," stand out in high relief on the weathered portions of the great Sphinx; and nearly the whole city of Paris has been reared out of the consolidated remains of lime-producing animals. Imagination is bewildered when it tries to picture the abundance of life which piled up the mountains that are round about Jerusalem,—which furnished the materials of the grandest of ancient monuments and the most beautiful of modern cities. Every stone which strewed our Saviour's pathway spoke of worlds and systems of life which passed away in ages for which we have no reckoning, compared with which the antiquity of the Pyramids is but as yesterday. Had they the faculty of articulate speech, how eloquently would they disclose the history of one of the most marvellous of the geological epochs! They would speak of the decease which Jesus was about to accomplish at Jerusalem; they would testify of life given up for the benefit of other life. The very site of the cross itself was the grave of creatures that had perished in order that a foundation might be provided on which man might rear his dwellings and cultivate his fields. Their ashes entombed the Lord's dead body even in that "clean place," that new sepulchre, hewn out of the rock, "wherein was man never yet laid." On the threshing-floor of Araunah other sacrifices had been made, long epochs before the destroying angel sheathed his sword beside the burnt-offering of David, or the dying cry of David's Son

uttered the mighty pæan of redemption, "It is finished." In the Mount of the Lord it is indeed seen that self-sacrifice is the genius and history of the place. There the rending of the rocks, the quaking of the earth, the darkening of the sun, and the opening of the graves, proved the sympathy of nature with her crucified Lord, who supplied the key of the one ruling symbol of nature, —the universal law of sacrifice, the triumph not only of life over suffering and death, but of life through suffering and death. On the world's one holiest spot all the types of the Old Testament, and all the types of the older, unwritten testament, converge in the great Archetype. It is seen that the scheme of redemption, so far from being, as some allege, a discord in Nature's voice, a harsh and grating note in her harmonious anthem, is "the grand continuation, the divine climax of the system of intervention and vicarious suffering, which not only pervades the natural world, but without which merciful alleviation the world would become a scene of hopeless misery." The oldest and widest fact of nature, the inmost experience of society, and the central truth of Christianity, meet, and are one; and man is "in league with the stones of the field." It must never be forgotten, however, that it is only the lowest—the self-sacrificing—aspect of the atonement that can be typified by stones. From the very limitations of its nature, the physical world cannot symbolize the propitiatory character of Christ's sacrifice. That is the unique revelation of the Gospel,—what makes the Gospel indeed "good news" to sinful, perishing souls.

Belonging to the same formation as the stones of Bethany is a material which perhaps more than any other has had to do with the higher education of mankind. Marble must have been specially prepared by God for the use of man, since he alone is capable of turning it to use, and enjoying its beauty. It was the prolepsis or prophecy of a being endowed with an acute sense of the beauty of colour and form. By the use of this flower and sublimation of the rocks in embodying the ideas of genius, that toil in the sweat of the brow which was the curse pronounced upon man because of sin, becomes the means of raising him to a higher region of life, and connecting him with the spiritual and eternal world. In working out the conceptions of his imagination in the pure and stainless stone, he works truly, though it may be unconsciously, after a divine pattern; he sees the laws of order and harmony impressed by the Almighty upon His creation, and is drawn into deepest sympathy with them; he is brought face to face with all the refining effects of that communion with the King in His beauty, whose image is truly mirrored in all the beauty of nature. Thus the earnest and reverent artist, sharing somewhat in the inspiration of Bezaleel and Aholiab, rescues the ideals of creation from the lawlessness and chaos of sin, and shows what man's form was in its original beauty, and what it may yet become in the palingenesis of the creature, when all degenerations and deformities are finally removed, and God shall say again of the work of His hands, that it is all very good. We see how the sculptor's art raised the ancient Greek

above the grotesque and grovelling dragon-worship of other pagan nations, and surrounded him with spiritual embodiments of the highest beauty and grace. It is true that by his worship of the statues of the gods, changing the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, he speedily sank into the awfully degraded state described by St. Paul. He had a higher ideal than could be represented by his gross worship, supplied to him by his own conscience; but because he put the lower nature above the higher, the lust of the flesh obtained dominion over him. And yet it is a remarkable fact, that whereas the deities of other nations were represented in plant or animal forms of the lowest kind, the statues of the Greek gods should have been modelled on the highest ideal of the human form,—that the Greeks alone should have believed, without revelation, that the human was the most adequate expression of the Divine. It looks as if this were a mysterious longing and groping after the incarnation of the Son of God,—as if these statues were, so to speak, the pagan types and unconscious prophecies of it,—preparations among the Gentiles for enabling them to believe in "the Chiefest among ten thousand," "the Altogether Lovely," when He should be preached to them,—for enabling St. Paul on the hill of Mars to say, "Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you." It is a matter of undoubted fact, that at the time of Christ the Greeks were riper for the reception of the great mystery of the Incarnation than the great majority of the monotheistic Jews, who crucified Jesus because He claimed to be the

Son of God. May not the familiarity of the Greeks, through their mythology, with the appearances of the gods in human form on earth, have had something to do with this surprising result? And may we not thus regard the marble statues of the Greek gods as crying out, "Hosanna! blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord;" while the living lips of the covenant people held their peace in unbelief?

There is one group of stones associated in kind with those of Olivet, though not on the same geological horizon, which also have had much to do with the progress of the human race. If marble is linked with the æsthetic requirements of mankind, coal and ironstone are connected with our industrial and social advancement. These two minerals are generally conjoined with limestone; and while they can be extracted and used separately for their own important purposes, they are combined to prepare one of their number for the service of man. Coal supplies fuel to smelt the iron; limestone acts as a flux, promoting the speedy reduction of the ore, and its purification from the other ingredients with which it is mixed; while the iron thus prepared in its turn furnishes tools with which the coal and limestone are dug up. We surely see in this beautiful correlated grouping of the most useful of all natural productions, not the result of a mere accident, but a remarkable example of wise forethought and providential design. There is not in any department of nature a more striking proof of that prospective contrivance—which argues intention, plan, and prevision, and therefore intelligence—

than that which the history of coal furnishes. The successive growth and submergence of the luxuriant primeval forests which formed it, and all the elaborate processes, chemical and mechanical, carried on for countless ages, by which it was converted into fuel, and stored up securely and conveniently under easily-workable strata of the earth, practically formed one long continuous prophecy of the advent of an intelligent being who, in the fulness of time, was to "subdue the earth." We are impressed thereby with the irresistible conviction that there is a God of creation and a God of providence, who has thus made provision, ages upon ages before man was born, for the latest of his wants and the grandest of his achievements. Nay, more: it involves even directly, the conclusion that there is a God of redemption, whose eye runs through man's prospective history at a glance, and whose covenant is therefore ordered in all things and sure. It reveals the fact that there was a system of types in nature long before those of the Written Word. It is a prophecy of the fall of man and the redemption from it. Through the long aisle of intervening ages the altar of the cross and the great Sacrifice upon it are seen. If limestone, composed of animal remains, indicated the self-sacrificing principle pervading the animal kingdom, coal, composed of plant remains, indicated its prevalence throughout the vegetable—disclosed the mystery hid from ages and generations, and explained by Christ: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he

that hateth his life shall keep it unto life eternal.' Each stratum of coal, as it was deposited, cried out in its mute but eloquent language of symbol, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

If this fuel was designed for the use of man, how could he reach it, piercing through overlying rocks, and digging into the bowels of the earth, without that "sweat of the face" which we all know was a consequence of the curse pronounced upon man's sin? How could he make use of it when obtained, in the commerce of nations, the multiplication of manufactures, the diffusion of knowledge, the progress of science and art, the facilities for travelling, and the thousand and one purposes of our great modern civilization, without toil of a very different kind from that which constituted the beneficent exercise of Adam in Eden? Regarded even in its lowest aspect as fuel for creating warmth, the vast collection of combustible materials stored up in the coal formation implied that it was intended for the use of a creature, in whom alone, of all the animals, the power of producing sufficient heat internally,—the necessary adaptation to external conditions of temperature by a physiological process,—is wanting. This failure of adjustment as regards temperature, like all the other failures of correspondence between man and nature, was doubtless caused by the fall, which deteriorated his whole physical as well as spiritual condition. The apron of fig-leaves with which our first parents attempted to clothe themselves, when their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked, indicates not only that they had lost the sweet

unconsciousness of innocence, but also the power of generating sufficient heat for their health and comfort; for we find no mention of clothing among the other provisions for their animal wants in their paradisaical state. And this conclusion is further confirmed by the fact, that God Himself substituted the warmer and more enduring skins of beasts for the insufficient protection of the fig-leaves. Thus we have the curse and the blessing, the evil and the remedy, united in the same prospective arrangement of the coal-formation, as truly as in the first promise made to Adam and Eve after the fall: "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." From this circumstance the argument for the Divine prevision of man's sin, and the Divine preparation for the remedial scheme, derives additional force and interest. For what is more likely, as it has been well said, than that He who brought about this marvellous adaptation of process to result and supply to demand in nature, incalculable ages before the creation of the very being in whose history they were yet to be exemplified, did also make provision for the fatal effects of human transgression, by resolving, ere yet the heavens and the earth were made, to send forth His Son, in the fulness of time, to redeem and renovate a lost creation?

The iron ore associated with the coal and limestone also testifies to the same great redemptive truths. It speaks of the sweat of human toil; and anticipates the plough to break up the bare hard wilderness for the sower, the pruning-knife to adapt the wasteful luxuriances of nature to man's necessities, the sword to create order

and peace amid anarchy and confusion. It foretells a being who, instead of finding a garden ready made, and everything furnished to his hand to dress and keep it, has to create a garden out of the barren waste, by the most strenuous labour—to make the very instruments with which he works; who has to discover, to think out theoretically, and reproduce practically, by the utmost strain his faculties can bear, the thoughts and purposes of God. By the powers and instruments with which iron furnishes man, his higher education begins: he rises from the savage to the civilized state. He is brought into the closest contact with those laws by which God maintains the order and life of the world, which he had broken, and whose penalty he had incurred; so that by humble and absolute submission to them he may win the blessings they contain; so that his work may be indeed "a readjustment of the lost harmony between man and the outer world, blighted for his sake, which expresses to him so much of the mind of God." He becomes a fellow-worker with God in adorning and enriching the earth by cultivation, and carrying on his work of mechanical contrivance on the same principles as those on which the Divine Designer wrought of old, and still works. He becomes a pupil in the school of God, by taking the dust of the earth, the humble materials of his microscopes and telescopes, and by their aid studying the remotest and minutest glories of the universe,—the mysteries of the world unseen. And through this discipline he is fitted to become God's fellow-worker in the higher Scripture sense, in his own

moral and spiritual development and that of others, both in adaptation to the present, and preparation for the future state.

Thus we see that iron, even while it lay embedded in the rock through vast cycles of time, was an appointed symbol testifying of the consequences of man's sin and the deliverance from them, was foreordained to work out the necessary natural preparations for the spiritual regeneration of the world. We know the mighty revolution which it has already wrought in the affairs of man and on the face of the earth; and who can tell but that the agencies which it has called into operation may continue to enlighten and evangelize the world, until barbarism is everywhere supplanted by civilization, and the darkness of paganism by the light of Christianity, and thus the earth be made ready for the coming and kingdom of its Redeemer? It was a significant feature in the land of Israel that its stones were iron, and out of its hills might be dug brass; for the conservation of Divine truth, and the spiritual education of the people to be the missionaries of the race, were closely bound up with these material resources. And so it is an equally significant fact of Divine Providence, that the countries which are most thoroughly enlightened by the faith kindled in Judæa, are precisely those whose stones are iron; that this precious gift is conferred upon those nations who can best employ it in preparing the way of the Lord upon the earth,—making the crooked places straight, and the rough places smooth, that all flesh may see the salvation of our God.

A large number of our medicinal substances are derived from the mineral kingdom. Of these, iron and magnesia, connected with the limestone system of rocks, are among the most important and widely known. The fact of these materials, admirably adapted to restore the human system when disordered, existing in the very foundation of our earth, entering into its formation from the very beginning, indicates that, long beforehand, man's fall was foreseen, and its consequences provided for in a remedial scheme. We cannot suppose that these healing substances were chance discoveries, applied by man to purposes for which God did not intend them; that the inferior ends which they subserve in the mechanical arts were designed, while their higher uses in medicine were altogether undestined. He who believes that every good gift is from above, will readily grant that if these substances are indeed remedial, if they can cure certain maladies of the human body which are the corporeal effects of sin, they were created by Him who healeth all our diseases and relieveth all our pains, for that very purpose. Thus iron and magnesia, the very stones under the feet of Jesus, cried out in the early epochs of the world's history their "Hosannas" to Him whose name was Jesus the Healer, and whose miracles of mercy on mankind united the corporeal and spiritual functions of the Great Physician. Truly the invisible things of God, the deep mysteries of redemption from the beginning of the world, were clearly seen, being understood by the things which were made, by the very rocks that form the foundations of the earth. This is no

glorious integrity, so that He is just, while the Justifier of the ungodly who believe in Jesus.

The precious fundamental doctrine, that the sinner who believes in Christ is saved, is symbolized by the remarkable, almost magical action of zinc upon its associate metals. When strips of copper, iron, tin, and silver, are placed in a vessel containing diluted nitric acid, in such a manner that they do not touch one another, the metals are gradually dissolved in the acid; but when each of them is soldered to a piece of zinc before placing it in the acid, they remain solid and uninjured, and the zinc alone is dissolved. This protection from a destroying element which zinc affords to the metals with which it is united, beautifully represents to us the deliverance which our Saviour has wrought out for those who are united to Him by faith, from the destroying effects of sin and death, at the expense of His own suffering and death. "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." The elevation of our nature by our Lord's assumption of it, may also be illustrated from the mineral kingdom, by a phenomenon which not unfrequently takes place in our mines, when crystals decompose under a change of conditions, and form skeletons, within whose cavity others of a different constitution and figure find nuclei and the conditions required for their development. In the mould left by the decay of the original perfect crystal of our nature caused by the fall, our Saviour developed the higher and more beautiful crystal of redeemed humanity. He Himself, in our form and name, filled

the sphere of purity and holiness from which we had disintegrated by sin; as the oxide of tin fills the hollows left behind by the decomposition of the felspar crystals in the granite rocks of Cornwall. Another very striking example of the exclusion of a lower metal by one of higher value, may be seen in the case of iron articles left in the water of mines abounding in sulphate of copper or blue vitriol. The sulphuric acid, by its stronger affinity for the iron, separates from the copper, and attacks and dissolves the iron, which as it gradually disappears from its place, is filled, particle after particle, by the copper; and thus the very shape, down to its minutest details, of the original iron article is retained by the copper which has dispossessed it. The whole subject of the formation of metals and crystals strikingly typifies the ennobling processes of grace, by which the Spirit of God changes the corruption of our nature into the bright and beautiful simplicity of a heavenly life. As the rude lump of coke may be crystallized into the exquisite light-refracting diamond, and as the common clay of the soil casts off its unattractive dress, and appears as the brilliant silver-like aluminium, so the sinner sunk lowest in the fearful pit and the miry clay may be transformed in the renewing of his mind, and become a new creature in Christ Jesus; and we know that this body of our humiliation will be changed at the resurrection, and fashioned like unto the glorious body of our Redeemer. Then too the changing of the earths into metals, through the disengagement of their oxygen, by the mediation of a third element for which the

oxygen has a greater affinity; and the building up, say of a crystal of salt, that has been crushed into powder, by the mediation of water, so that out of the solution the separate particles shall emerge, and unite and form a new crystal, equal to the original in size, regularity, and transparency,—are beautiful examples in the mineral world of the great Mediatorial work of the Saviour, by which we are reconciled to God and reconciled to ourselves, so as to become one in Him. Further still, the prevalence of evil in the world, even in things that are good, is typified by the universal diffusion of that poisonous mineral, arsenic—being found even in common salt; while the moral correctives that exist side-by-side with evil, are symbolized by the mineral tests that prove the presence of mineral poisons, and possess the power of neutralizing their effects. And it must not be lost sight of, that it is owing to a process of the most refined chemistry, and to the use of a material until recently unknown, that the Bible can now be produced for an exceedingly small sum, and be multiplied with marvellous rapidity to any extent. The coincidence of this material process with God's gradual natural method of imparting the revelation of His will to men, is surely a most striking example of Divine prevision, and must be regarded as entering into that plan of redemption which was foreordained before the foundation of the world.

But I must pause here, although I have only entered on the threshold of my subject. It is commonly supposed that it is only in living things that we can discern evidences of design and types of the spiritual world. It

is thought that in the inorganic realm we come nearer to the efficient than to the final causes of things; or, if mineral substances do shadow forth their design, that design is entirely exhausted in adaptation to organic life. But the previous observations will, it is hoped, show to us that final as well as efficient causes may be traced in the mineral kingdom; that its phenomena are no other than the economical laws of the moral world, and the great truths of redemption in pictures and representations. Each stone, in a far higher sense than Paley's watch, not only presents an example of a definite and an intelligent design, but embodies some great thought of God, and is a type or a prophecy of some truth of redemption. Each stone is a medal of creation, and bears the image and superscription of the Lord of all. Each stone contains the spiritual signs impressed by the finger of God, as truly as the tables of stone on which were engraved the moral law. Not only does the vegetable kingdom bring its frankincense and myrrh; the mineral kingdom also brings its gold to the feet of Jesus. Not only are the palm branches strewn in His way; the very stones cry out "Hosanna." The mineral kingdom is one string of the grand harp of creation, that harmoniously shows forth His praise. As St. Augustine says, "*Discite lapides æstimare negotiatores regni cœlorum.*" To no one department of nature is the task of imaging spiritual truth confined. Even the humblest shape of inorganic matter has something to tell us of the unsearchable riches of Christ Jesus, and can no more be spared from the great typology of nature, than the

smallest type of the Messiah can be spared from the Old Testament. The whole system of things around us was constituted from the beginning with a view to redemption. "When He appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth; and my delights were with the sons of men." Not in the good gold, the bdellium and the onyx stone of the earthly Eden, do we realize the whole idea of God as symbolized by the mineral kingdom; but in the jasper walls, and golden streets, and foundations garnished with all manner of precious stones, of the New Jerusalem: matter in its purest, highest, and least perishable form constituting the home of redeemed man in his noblest condition, transformed into the likeness of the Redeemer, —the creation that groaned and travailed with pain exalted in the redemption of man, for which it waited so long.

"As wheeled by seeing spirits towards the East,
. . . . . where faint and fair,
Along the tingling desert of the sky,
Beyond the circle of the conscious hills,
Were laid in jasper stone, as clear as glass,
The first foundations of that new near Day,
Which should be builded out of heaven to God;
. . . . . 'jasper first,' I said,
And second, sapphire; third, chalcedony;
The rest in order; last an amethyst."

CHAPTER V.

THORNS THE CURSE OF ADAM AND THE CROWN OF CHRIST.

"Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."—GENESIS iii. 18.

"And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head."—MATTHEW xxvii. 29.

NATURE is a mirror in which we behold both the skill and character of the Divine Artificer; but the reflected image—owing to the peculiarity of the material, or of the angle of vision—is not always a true one. While innumerable objects display the very highest ideal of beauty, and represent, we believe, the perfect form of the Divine thought embodied in them, we not unfrequently meet with objects that seem strange exceptions to the general rule, and impress us with a painful sense of failure and imperfection;—useless rudimentary teats of the males of mammalia; wings of birds incapable of flight; the dart of the bee, the employment of which causes its death; the capsule of the poppy, and of many of the Campanulæ, whose dehiscence or opening occurs near the summit, and renders dispersion of the seed

difficult; the downy tuft of many of the sterile seeds of the Compositæ, while the fertile seeds have none, or only possess a plume which falls off the seed instead of serving for its transportation; the neuter flowers of the hydrangea and the guelder-rose. In every part of creation, we find examples of wasted energy and frustrated design; foundations laid, but the building never completed; the skeleton formed, but never clothed with living flesh; an unceasing production of means that are never used, embryos that are never vivified, germs that are never developed. Nature, as Tennyson has thoughtfully said, seems so careful of the type, but so careless of the single life. Each species keeps in existence by the sheer force of untold numbers, that are continually brought into the field, and sacrificed in the fierce struggle for life; and just in proportion as an animal or plant is exposed to destruction, is it endowed with the power of reproduction. How little of all the boundless prodigality of young life that year after year cheers us with its bright promise, comes to maturity! Of the myriad blossoms that make the apple or the cherry tree gleam in the orchard like a white cloud caught among the branches, by far the largest number soon fall in showers, and chill the green grass beneath with that saddest of all storms, the summer snow. Of the blossoms that actually set, but a very few grow and ripen into mellow fruit; the rest almost as soon as they acquire shape begin to shrivel, and are speedily pushed off the parent twig by the growth of their stronger rivals. And of all the healthful apple-seeds and cherry-stones, annually shed

in our orchards, though each containing the germ of a lovely and fruitful tree, not one in a thousand is destined to take root, grow up, and accomplish what might seem the purpose of its creation. This is but one familiar example of what takes place everywhere throughout the world of vegetation and the world of animal life; and it strikes us with an idea of incompleteness—with a sad feeling of the apparent contradiction between the means and the ends of creation.

We cannot, however, in such things, measure the Divine proceedings by our human standards; for, taking a larger view of the subject, we find that the imperfection of particular parts is necessary for the perfection of the whole scheme, and all instances of failure are made to work together for the general good. The lavish profusion of blossoms in spring, compared with the limited supply of fruit in autumn, is a beautiful spectacle for the education of what is most spiritual in man,—an illustration of the truth that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that cometh out of the mouth of God—by beauty as well as by utility—a symbol of the large-hearted, free-handed goodness of God who gives us all things *richly* to enjoy. In the lavish profusion of seeds and embryos, we have a striking example of a higher law superseding a lower,—the law of sacrifice controlling the law of reproduction. The increase of the individual species is rendered subsidiary to the benefit of the whole economy of life. The superfluous seeds and embryos which each plant or animal produces are employed to minister to the

necessities of higher creatures. It is to this tendency of Nature to overflow its banks, to attempt more than she can execute, to begin more than she can finish, that we owe our own daily bread. For if the corn-plant produced only a sufficient number of seeds barely to perpetuate the species, there would be no annual miracle of the multiplication of the loaves; and man, always at the point of starvation, could neither replenish and subdue the earth, nor accomplish any of the great purposes of his existence.

Thorns are among the most striking examples of failure on the part of nature to reach an ideal perfection. They are not essential organs, perfect parts, but in every case altered or abortive structures. They are formed in two different ways. When the hairs that occur on the stem of a plant are enlarged and hardened, they form rigid opaque conical processes such as those of the rose and the bramble. The so-called thorns of these plants are not, however, true thorns, but prickles, for they have only a superficial origin, being produced by the epidermis only, and having no connection with the woody tissue. They may be easily separated from the stem, without leaving any mark or laceration behind. True thorns or spines, on the contrary, have a deeper origin and cannot be so removed. They are not compound hardened hairs, but abnormal conditions of buds and branches. A branch, owing to poverty of soil, or unfavourable circumstances, does not develop itself; it produces no twigs or leaves; it therefore assumes the spinous or thorny form, terminating in a more or less

pointed extremity, as in the common hawthorn. In some cases, as in the sloe, we see the transformation going on at different stages; some branches bearing leaves on their lower portions and terminating in spines. A bud by some means or other becomes abortive; there is a deficiency of nutriment to stimulate its growth; it does not develop into blossom and fruit. Its growing point, therefore, is hardened; its scaly envelopes are consolidated into woody fibre, and the whole bud becomes a sharp thorn. Leaves are also occasionally arrested in their development and changed into thorns, as in the stipules of Robinia, of the common barberry, and of several species of acacia. The middle nerve of the leaf in a few instances absorbs to itself all the parenchyma or green cellular substance, and therefore hardens into a thorn; and in the holly all the veins of the leaves become spiny. In all these cases thorns are not necessary, but accidental appendages, growths arrested and transformed by unfavourable circumstances; and Nature, by the law of compensation, converts them into means of defence to the plants on which they are produced—not very effective defences in most instances, but still analogous to the spines of the hedgehog and the quills of the porcupine, and typical of the plan according to which Nature supplies some method of preservation to every living thing that is liable to be injured.

By cultivation many thorny plants may be deprived of their spines. The apple, the pear, and the plum tree, in a wild state are thickly covered with thorns; but when

reared in the shelter of the garden, and stimulated by all the elements most favourable for their full development, they lose these thorns, which become changed into leafy branches, and blossoming and fruit-bearing buds. In this way man acquires the rights assigned to him by God, and Nature yields to him the pledges of his sovereignty, and reaches her own ideal of beauty and perfection by his means. But when, on the other hand, he ceases to dress and keep the garden, Nature regains her former supremacy, and brings back the cultivated plants to a wilder and more disordered condition than at first. A garden abandoned to neglect, owing to the absence or the carelessness of the owner, presents a drearier spectacle than the untamed wilderness; everything bursting out into rank luxuriance; stems originally smooth covered with prickles, and buds that would have burst into blossoms changing into thorns. It is a remarkable circumstance that whenever man cultivates Nature, and then abandons her to her own unaided energies, the result is far worse than if he had never attempted to improve her at all. There are no such thorns found in a state of nature as those produced by the ground which man once has tilled, but has now deserted. In the waste clearings amid the fernbrakes of New Zealand, and in the primeval forests of Canada, thorns may now be seen which were unknown there before. The nettle and the thistle follow man wherever he goes, and remain as perpetual witnesses of his presence, even though he departs; and around the cold hearth-stone of the ruined shieling on the Highland moor, and on the

threshold of the crumbling log-hut in the Australian bush, these social plants may be seen growing, forming a singular contrast to the vegetation around them.

No country in the world, now that it has been so long let out of cultivation, has such a variety and abundance of thorny plants, as the once-favoured heritage of God's people, the land flowing with milk and honey. Travellers call the Holy Land "a land of thorns." Giant thistles, growing to the height of a man on horseback, frequently spread over regions once rich and fruitful, as they do on the pampas of South America; and many of the most interesting historic spots and ruins are rendered almost inaccessible by thickets of fiercely-armed buckthorns. Entire fields are covered with the troublesome creeping stems of the spinous *Ononis* or rest-harrow; while the bare hill-sides are studded with the dangerous capsules of the Paliurus and Tribulus. Roses of the most prickly kinds abound on the lower slopes of Hermon; while the sub-tropical valleys of Judæa are choked up in many places by the thorny Lycium, whose lilac flowers and scarlet fruit cannot be plucked owing to erect branches armed at all points with spines. The feathery trees of the *Zizyphus spina Christi*, or Christ's thorn, that fringe the banks of the Jordan, and flourish on the marshy borders of the Lake of Gennesaret, are beautiful to look at, but terrible to handle, concealing as they do, under each of the small delicately formed leaves of a brilliant green, a thorn curved like a fish-hook, which grasps and tears everything that touches it. Dr. Tristram mentions that in

passing through thorny thickets near Jericho, the clothes of his whole party were torn to rags. And in addition to the immense variety of native thorns, for which there are at least twenty different names in the Bible, several prickly plants have been introduced from other countries, as for instance the *Opuntia* or Indian fig, a species of cactus that came originally from America, and is now widely diffused over all the East. In short, thorny plants, the evidences of a degenerate flora, and of deteriorated physical conditions, now form the most conspicuous vegetation of Palestine, and supply abundant mournful proof of the literal fulfilment of prophecy, "Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city."

This tendency of nature to produce a greater variety of thorny plants in ground let out of cultivation, as illustrated by the present vegetation of Palestine, throws considerable light upon the curse pronounced upon Adam when he had sinned: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." Many individuals believe that we have in this curse the origin of thorns and thistles—that they were previously altogether unknown in the economy of Nature. It is customary to picture Eden as a paradise of immaculate loveliness, in which everything was perfect, and all the objects of Nature harmonized with the holiness and happiness of our first parents. The ground yielded only beautiful flowers and fruitful trees—every plant reached the highest ideal of form, colour, and

usefulness of which it was capable. Preachers and poets in all ages have made the most of this beautiful conception. It is not, however, Scripture or scientific truth, but human fancy. Nowhere in the singularly measured and reticent account given in Genesis of man's first home, do we find anything, if rightly interpreted, that encourages us to form such an ideal picture of it. It was admirably adapted to man's condition, but it was not in all respects ideally perfect. The vegetation that came fresh from God's hand, and bore the impress of His seal that it was all very good, was created for death and reproduction; for it was called into being as "the herb *yielding seed*, and the fruit tree bearing fruit, whose seed was in itself." We must remember, too, that it was *before* and not after the Fall, that Adam was put into the garden to "*dress and keep it.*" The very fact that such a process of dressing and keeping was necessary, indicates in the clearest manner that Nature was not at first ideally perfect. The skill and toil of man called in, presuppose that there were luxuriant growths to be pruned, tendencies of vegetation to be checked or stimulated, weeds to be extirpated, tender flowers to be trained and nursed, and fruits to be more richly developed. The primeval blessing consisted in replenishing the earth and subduing it; and in no other way could man subdue the earth than by cultivating it. But the process of cultivation of necessity implies the existence of thorns and weeds. For in cultivating any spot we have to contend against the great law of Nature which spreads every plant as widely as its

constitution will permit. We wish to rear one special useful plant at the expense of all others; but Nature will not suffer this exclusiveness, and therefore she persists in thrusting upon us the aboriginal vegetation of the soil, which we regard as weeds. From this law of the universal diffusion of plants arises also, of necessity, the tendency to form thorns. For when plants are struggling with each other for the possession of the soil, some species must be so crowded that they cannot develop themselves freely; and therefore, owing to the exhaustion of the soil and the pressure around them, they must produce abortive branches or thorns. We have every reason to believe that this law existed in the pre-Adamite world, and was in full operation before the Fall. Man's sin produced no change upon the laws of vegetable development; and the Flora of Eden exhibited the same physiological tendencies which our present vegetation exhibits. The trees of the garden among which the Lord God walked, needed then, as they do now, the cultivation of man to develop their thorns into leafy branches, and blossoming and fruit-bearing buds; and the thistles had then, as now, to be cleared away, in order that only what was beautiful and profitable might grow.

What then, we may ask, is implied in the language of the curse, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee"? We are not, as I have said, to understand by it that thorns and thistles were then for the first time introduced—that there was a sudden arrestment then and there made by the Almighty in the formation of branches, and thus a blight passed on this part of crea-

tion. If Adam had never seen any thorns previously, he could not have understood the meaning of the curse pronounced upon the ground, any more than he could have understood the nature of the penalty threatened against disobedience, unless there had been death in the world before the Fall. The Hebrew form of the curse implies, not that a new thing should happen, but that an old thing should be intensified and exhibited in new relations. Just as the rainbow, which was formerly a mere natural phenomenon, became after the Flood the symbol of the great world covenant; just as death, which during all the long ages of geology had been a mere phase of life, the termination of existence, became after the Fall the most bitter and poisonous fruit of sin: so thorns, which in the innocent Eden were the effects of a law of vegetation, became significant intimations of man's deteriorated condition. It is in relation to man, solely, that we are to look at the curse; for though the production of briers and thorn-bearing plants may add to man's labour and distress, it supplies food and enjoyment for multitudes of inferior creatures, and especially birds and insects. It seems, indeed, as if thorns, which are most frequently produced upon trees and bushes that have a dense habit of growth, were intended as an additional means of security to little birds that seek safety in them from birds of prey—whose large size effectually prevents them from penetrating through the thorn-guarded hedges into the interior.

Man, in Eden, was placed in the most favourable circumstances. It was a garden specially prepared

by God himself for his habitation, and stocked with all that he could reasonably require. It was to be a pattern after which his own efforts in improving the world were to be modelled—a coign of vantage, a select and blessed centre, from which he was by degrees to subdue the wild prodigality of nature, and make of the earth an extended paradise. And, therefore, though the native tendencies of vegetation were not altogether eradicated, they were so far restrained that the dressing and keeping of the garden furnished him with healthful employment for all his powers of body and mind, and conferred upon him the dignity of developing the perfection, which potentially, though not actually, existed in Nature, and thus becoming a fellow-worker with God. But when excluded from Eden, he had to encounter, with powers greatly weakened by sin, the full, merciless force of Nature's untamed energies; energies, too, excited into greater opposition against him by his own efforts to subdue them. For, as I have already said, the very process of cultivation, while it removes the thorns and briers of the soil, will, if it be given up, produce a greater variety and luxuriance of thorns and thistles than the ground originally produced. The very fertility imparted to the soil would, if allowed to nourish its native vegetation, result in a greater rankness of useless growth. And therefore the tiller of the ground must never relax his efforts. In the sweat of his brow he must not only ceaselessly dig the soil, but extirpate the thorns and thistles; for Nature, kept back by main strength, is ever watching her opportunity, and whenever

man's struggle with her is given up in weariness or idleness, she pours all her wild hordes of ravenous weeds upon the deserted fields, to revel and luxuriate in their fatness, and the last state of these fields is worse than the first.

Although thorns therefore did exist before the Fall, it is nevertheless an interesting and significant circumstance, that they are peculiar, so far as we can judge from negative evidence, to the human epoch. Among the fossil remains that have been found in the various strata of the earth, we have revealed to us types of plants which had no tendency to produce thorns. We have abundance of fossil animals furnished with spines and quills, and other weapons of offence and defence; but not one indisputable thorn or thistle has been found in the older rocks. The vegetation of the ages previous to the carboniferous era was principally cryptogamic. During the coal period the plants were almost exclusively ferns, lycopods, and pines. In the secondary formations we find only cycads and palms, which exhibit no spiny forms. The fossil plants of the tertiary strata indicate the commencement of new types of organization, corresponding to altered circumstances. The cryptogams, conifers, and monocotyledons of former epochs are replaced by the higher order of the dicotyledons, many of which are still existing, and merely present specific differences. Elms, beeches, maples, hazels, alders, and others of our indigenous trees, begin to appear; and with each succeeding period, a more useful and varied vegetation is ushered upon the scene;

until at last, at the eleventh hour of the creation day, flower and fruit-bearing trees are produced—"good for food and pleasant to the sight." Among the plants directly and especially associated with man, and apparently introduced only a short time previous to his advent, are those of the Rosal Alliance; an order of vegetation not only among the most extensive that is known, numbering upwards of ten thousand species, but also one of the most important, whether as regards the beauty and grace of its blossoms, the richness and nutritiousness of its fruits, or its applicability to a thousand useful purposes. It includes the large class of the leguminous plants, such as the pea, the bean, the clover, the lucerne, all staple articles of culture by the farmer; also the almondworts—such as the peach, the cherry, the plum, the almond; the appleworts—such as the apple, the pear, the sorb, the medlar, the quince, the service; and the roseworts—such as the queenly rose in all its endless varieties, the strawberry, the bramble, the rasp. All these beautiful flowers, rich fruits, and useful vegetables, are of recent date; their remains are found only in deposits near the surface, and may be employed as marks of the human period, in cases where no indication of man or his works appear. Now it is a remarkable circumstance, that it is to this great order of plants specially connected with man, that thorns principally belong. An unusually large proportion of its genera and species exhibit an extraordinary tendency to produce abortive buds and branches. All the previous floras which appeared during the various geologic epochs were

sombre and unproductive, could support no flocks or herds, or yield employment for the gardener or the farmer; and therefore they were destitute of thorns or spines, were unsusceptible of improvement or degradation at the hands of man. They had no relation to man's food and enjoyment, and thus could have had no relation to his labour and pain. But no sooner did the beauty and fruitfulness of plants specially created for the gratification of man's senses appear, than thorns and thistles appeared along with them.

I believe that the thorns and briers thus introduced in connection with the human epoch, but before the Fall, were anticipative consequences, prophetic symbols of that Fall. We err greatly, if we suppose that sin came into the world unexpectedly—produced a sudden shock and dislocation throughout nature, and took God as it were by surprise—that the atonement was a Divine afterthought to remedy a defect in God's creative foresight and natural law. He who sees the end from the beginning, knew that such a mournful moral lapse would happen—that Creation would fall with its king and high priest, and had therefore made preparations for it, not only in the plans of heaven, but also in the objects and arrangements of earth. There are many things in the scheme of Nature which had a reference to the fact of sin before it became a fact; which remind us unmistakeably that God, in fitting up this world to be the habitation of a moral being who should fall through sin, and be restored through suffering, had filled it with types and symbols of that fall and that restoration. In

the previous chapter we have seen that the Lamb was slain from the *foundation of the world*, not only in the counsels of the Godhead, but also in the types of Nature—in the one ruling type of Nature, the universal law of sacrifice; and so equally the sin which rendered that expiation necessary was also typified from the foundation of the world, in the objects and processes of Nature. The more we study this mysterious subject in the light both of science and revelation, the more we shall be convinced that the epic of Paradise Lost was written on all the stony tablets of the geologist, and that countless tokens of death and degradation sang in eras long before his advent, "of man's disobedience, and the fruit of that forbidden tree."

But passing from the purely physical aspect of the subject, let us look at it in its symbolical significance. When God said to Adam, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee," He acted according to a plan uniformly pursued by Him in all His subsequent dispensations and dealings with men; by which in gracious condescension to our twofold nature, and to the carnal and spiritual classes of mankind, He associated the natural with the spiritual, gave the outward sign of the inward spiritual truth. He set the field of Nature with types of degeneracy and arrested growth, which should symbolize to man the consequences upon his own nature of his own sin. What then are the thorns, looking at them in this typical aspect, produced by the sinful, accursed soil of man's heart and life? They may be classified

under the four general heads of *labour*, *pain*, *sorrow*, and *death*.

Labour is one of the thorns of the curse. "All things," says the wise man, "are full of labour." Without it life cannot be maintained. Unremitting labour from day to day and from year to year—except in the case of a few races into whose lap Nature pours, almost unsolicited, her prodigal stores, and who therefore continue children in body and mind all their lives*—is the condition upon which we receive our daily bread. Much of this labour is indeed healthy. In work alone is health and life; and it is for work that God has created faculties. But how much

* It is an interesting fact, showing the precariousness of a natural spontaneous supply of food, and the necessity of man's labour for his support, that even the bread-fruit tree is comparatively scarce, and useful only as a cultivated plant. Its seeds, as Mr. Wallace tells us, are entirely aborted by cultivation, and the tree therefore can only be propagated by cuttings, which require considerable care and trouble. The fruit of the wild variety, which spreads itself all over the tropics by means of seed, is altogether worthless as food. In proof of the same great law of life, that in the sweat of his face man shall eat bread, Mr. Wallace further mentions, that the natives of the Aru Islands, who have no staff of life, and depend upon any wild roots and fruits they can find, are afflicted with terrible skin diseases and ulcers; while the Malays and the Hill Dyaks who grow rice are clean-skinned. Cutaneous diseases are everywhere exceedingly common among savages who do not cultivate the soil; thus emphatically testifying that man cannot make a beast of himself with impunity, feeding like the cattle upon the herbs and fruits of the earth, and taking no thought for the morrow. To maintain his health and beauty he must cultivate the ground, and raise from it some farinaceous product, such as corn or rice, which is capable of being stored up for a time of scarcity, and so giving him a regular supply of wholesome food

of it, nevertheless, is terrible drudgery, effectually hindering the development of the higher faculties of the mind and soul, wearisome effort, vanity, and vexation of spirit! How much of failure is there in it, of disproportion between desires and results! How much of it is like rolling the fabled stone of Sisyphus up the steep hill only to roll down again immediately—like weaving ropes of sand! How often does the heart despair amid the unprofitableness of all its labour under the sun! We plough our fields and sow our seed; but instead of a bountiful harvest to reward us, too often comes up a crop of thorns and thistles, to wound the toiling hand and pierce the aching brow.

Then there is the thorn of *pain*—the darkest mystery of life. Some maintain that pain exists by necessity, that it has its root in the essential order of the world. It is the thorn that guards the rose of pleasure—the sting that protects the honey of life. There can be no doubt, indeed, that it is one of the chief incentives to the performance of actions on which the maintenance or security of life hangs; that it exalts pleasure by the contrast which it supplies, that it enters as an essential element into the enjoyments of sense, and into the highest thoughts and emotions of the soul. It is true that it performs the same beneficent purpose in the economy of man, which the abortive thorny growth does in that of the plant; that were it not for the warnings of pain, these fearfully and wonderfully constructed bodies of ours would often be seriously injured, without our knowledge, unless, indeed, our attention were kept in a constant state of distressing watchfulness, worse almost than

any pain. But ask any martyr to physical suffering if that explanation satisfies him. Why, if the purpose of pain is a purely benevolent one, should it be so excessive? Why should it rend and rack the frame with agony? Why should it last so long? Why should our sensibility be more developed for pain than for pleasure, and a slight pain destroy much happiness? Why should some begin to suffer tortures as soon as they begin to live; and be destined in their mother's womb to lives of lingering disease? Why, as in the case of burning, should it exhaust the system, and thus produce the fatal result it was intended to prevent? Methinks, if pain were meant merely to warn us of the presence of evil, and guard us against it, that a much less degree and a shorter duration of it would suffice. All these explanations of pain as a benevolent agency are so manifestly insufficient, that we are driven to seek a deeper reason for its existence. The Bible, and the Bible alone, tells us the cause and the origin of it. It tells us that it is nothing else than a witness for sin—the thorn which man's body, weakened and palsied by sin, produces. Did that body continue in its primitive condition of purity and perfection, its machinery would have worked on unimpaired, perhaps, for ever; like the angelic body, or the body of Christ in heaven. But the Fall put it out of gear, and made it unfit for its original purpose. It therefore begins to die the moment it begins to live, being never purely healthy. Man feels in his body the physical consequences of the death which his soul has died. He has the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, that he may be

reminded continually of his sin and mortality, and be induced to walk softly all the days of his life.

Then there is the thorn of *sorrow*. Every branch of the human tree may be arrested and transformed by some casualty into a thorn of sorrow. The staff of friendship upon which we lean may break and pierce the hand. The bud of love which we cherish in our heart, and feed with the life-blood of our affections, may be blighted by the chill of death, and become a thorn to wound us grievously. For six thousand years man has been assiduously cultivating the tree of human life, but he has never, by all his science and skill, been able to divest it of its thorns of sorrow. An old grievance has here and there been removed, but a new one has invariably taken its place. That civilization which has lessened physical troubles, has rendered us more susceptible to mental ones; and side by side with its manifold sources of enjoyment, are opened up manifold sources of suffering. And why is all this? Why is man, so highly cultivated, the possessor of such vast resources of science and art, still born to trouble as the sparks fly upward? There is no possible way of accounting for it save by the primeval curse: "In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life."

And, lastly, as the climax of all life's evils, is *death*, the prospect and the endurance of it, from both of which our whole nature, originally made in the image of God, and destined to live for ever, revolts with the utmost abhorrence. Such are the thorns which man's nature, under the withering, distorting curse of sin, produces. Cursed

is the ground within, as well as the ground without, for man's sake; and in labour, in pain, in sorrow, and in death, does he eat of its fruit.

From all these thorns Jesus came to deliver us. The Second Adam in the poverty of His condition has recovered for us all that the first Adam in the plenitude of his blessings lost. The Son of Man was tempted in that wilderness to which sin had reduced the world; and in consequence of His overcoming the temptation, He has obtained a pledge that the wilderness will become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. His miracles were first-fruits of the world's restoration, symbols of man's recovered dominion over nature. And day by day, as the influence of Christ's great victory over the tempter is more widely and deeply felt, the prophecy is being fulfilled, that "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree, and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." The Roman soldiers platted a crown of thorns and put it upon the head of Jesus; but they little knew the significance of the act. Upon the august brow of man's surety and substitute was thus placed in symbol, what was done in spiritual reality, a chaplet woven of those very thorns which the ground, cursed for man's sake, produced. None of these thorns grew in the sacred soil of Jesus' heart. But He who knew no sin was made sin for us. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. He could, no doubt, by the exercise of His almighty power, remove the thorns of man's life.

He who created the world by a word, had only to command, and it should be done. But not in this way could the necessities of the case be met. It was not mere arbitrary power that called the thorns into existence; it was justice and judgment: and, therefore, mere arbitrary power could not eradicate them; it required mercy and truth. And mercy and truth could be reconciled with justice and judgment only by the obedience and sacrifice of the Son of God. Jesus had, therefore, to wear the thorns which man's sin had developed, in order that man might enjoy the peaceful fruits of righteousness which Christ's atonement had produced.

And who can tell what suffering the wearing of these thorns occasioned Him? The mere physical laceration and pain of the material thorns were as nothing, were altogether unfelt under the pressure of far heavier sufferings in His soul. It was not outward thorns, but inward spiritual thorns, that caused Him to sweat great drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane. It was not the sharp sting of the crown of thorns upon His brow on the cross, that bowed His head with agony, but the pressure of that "sorrow's crown of sorrow," the mental anguish of imputed sin so abhorrent to His high and holy nature. Made a curse for us, Jesus was made liable to every sorrow to which the curse has subjected us. Every thorn which the sinful soil of man's heart has produced, was woven into the crown of thorns which pierced His brow. And what is the result? By wearing these thorns He has blunted them, plucked them out of our path, out of our heart, out of our life. By enduring them He con-

quered them. The crown of pain became the crown of triumph; and the submission to ignominy and suffering became the assertion and establishment of a sovereignty over every form of suffering. Evil is now a vanquished power. Every woe bears upon it the inscription "overcome." He bore the thorny crown of labour, and labour is now a sacred thing, a precious discipline, a merciful education. It is the lowest step of the ladder by which man ascends the Edenic height from which he fell. It is the necessary physical foundation upon which his education as a spiritual being is based; standing in the same relation to his growth in grace, as the work of the coral zoophyte to the intelligent labour of man who inhabits the island which it builds. There is no labour in vain in the Lord. No disappointment mars or embitters any work done in Christ and for His glory. He wore the thorny crown of pain, and pain is now robbed of the element that exasperates our nature against it. By His own example He teaches us that we must be made perfect through suffering; and knowing this, we do not feel pain to be less, but we feel a strength and a patience which enable us to rise superior to it. As the Prince of sufferers, He wore the thorny crown of sorrow, and He has made, in the experience of His afflicted ones, that abortive thorn to produce the blossom of holiness and the fruit of righteousness. Sorrow is no more to the Christian the curse of Adam, but the cross of Christ. It is the crown and badge of his royal dignity, the proof of Divine sonship. Wearing his crown of sorrow, the Christian is a prince in disguise, and bears the marks of the Lord

Jesus, and has a fellowship with Him in His sorrows; a fellowship which involves unspeakable blessedness and assured victory. And, lastly, He wore the thorny crown of death; and therefore He says, "If a man keep my sayings, he shall not *see* death." He has indeed to pass through the state, but the bitterness of death for him is past. He has only to finish his course with joy; to fall asleep in Jesus; to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Wonderful love, stronger than death, overcoming death, swallowing up death in victory! Wonderful that by the light and power of that love, the sharpest and deadliest thorn on life's tree, should be developed into the immortal flowers and fruits of the all-perfect paradise of heaven!

Such, then, is the way in which our Saviour has borne, and in bearing has removed, the thorns from the life of those who believe in His name. In all our afflictions He is afflicted; and therefore the angel of His presence saves us. That thorny crown of His humiliation and sufferings is henceforth the emblem of victory, in which all His redeemed shall triumph. Jesus has conquered for us, and we have conquered in Him. In the endurance of the thorns of the primeval curse, labour, and pain, and sorrow, and whatever else of evil may be in our lot, let us seek then to be distinguished from the world, and likened to our Lord, by the patient, trusting spirit in which we bear them! And let us use them, under His blessing, as a discipline and a preparation for that crown of glory which is the purchase solely of the Redeemer's crown of thorns!

PREVENTING MERCIES.

"Let Thy tender mercies speedily prevent us."—PSALM lxxix. 8.

THE hawthorn hedge that keeps us from intruding,
Looks very fierce and bare,
When, stripped by winter, every branch protruding
Its thorns that wound and tear.

But spring-time comes; and, like the rod that budded,
Each twig breaks out in green;
And cushions soft of tender leaves are studded,
Where spines alone were seen.

And honeysuckle, its bright wreath upbearing,
The prickly top adorns;
Its golden trumpets victory declaring
Of blossoms over thorns.

Nature in this mute parable unfoldeth
A lesson sweet to me;
God's goodness in reproof my eye beholdeth,
And His severity.

There is no grievous chastening but combineth
Some brightness with the gloom;
Round every thorn in the flesh there twineth
Some wreath of softening bloom.

The sorrows that to us seem so perplexing,
Are mercies kindly sent,
To guard our wayward souls from sadder vexing,
And greater ills prevent.

Like angels stern, they meet us when we wander
Out of the narrow track,
With sword in hand, and yet with voices tender,
To warn us quickly back.

We fain would eat the fruit that is forbidden
Not heeding what God saith!
But by these flaming cherubim we're chidden
Lest we should pluck our death.

To save us from the pit, no screen of roses
Would serve for our defence;
The hindrance that completely interposes,
Stings back with violence.

At first, when smarting from the shock, complaining
Of wounds that freely bleed,
God's hedges of severity us paining,
May seem severe indeed.

No tender veil of heavenly verdure brightens
The branches fierce and bare;
No sun of comfort the dark sky enlightens,
Or warms the wintry air.

But *afterwards*, God's blessed spring-time cometh.
And bitter murmurs cease;
The sharp severity that pierced us bloometh,
And yields the fruits of peace.

The Wreath of Life its healing leaves discovers,
Twined round each wounding stem,
And, climbing by the thorns, above them hovers
Its flowery diadem.

The Last Day only, all God's plan revealing,
Shall teach us what we owe
To these *preventing mercies*, thus concealing
Themselves in masks of woe;

Shall tell what wrongs they kept us from committing,
What lust and pride they crossed,
What depths of sin they fenced, in which unwitting
Our souls would have been lost.

Then let us sing, our guarded way thus wending,
Life's hidden snares among,
Of mercy and of judgment sweetly blending;
Earth's sad but lovely song.

CHAPTER VI.

TREACLE, OR LIKE CURES LIKE.

"Is there no balm (*treacle* in old version) in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"—JEREMIAH viii. 22.

MUCH of late years has been done in what may be called the geology of language. Philologists have been diligently at work with their hammers, splitting open dull and unpromising-looking blocks of words, and finding many curious fossils within them, that tell a tale of themselves as wonderful as any Oozoon or Oldhamia, of the Laurentian or Devonian formations. In some of the most familiar terms they have found a mine of historical interest, bringing down to us the memory of some obsolete custom or long-forgotten incident. Among the most remarkable of the words derived from ancient languages, and now naturalized in our English tongue, which have brought with them some historical association or memorial, is the subject of this chapter. The word treacle is derived from the Greek word *therion*, which meant primarily a wild beast of any kind, but was afterwards more especially applied to animals which had

a venomous bite. By many Greek writers the term was used to denote a serpent or viper specifically. In this sense it is employed in the last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where we are told that "when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm." The Greek word translated "beast," in the fourth and fifth verses, is *therion;* and though the word rendered "viper" in the preceding verse is different, being *echidna*, it nevertheless specializes the meaning of *therion*, and proves that it refers to this species of serpent. But what connection, it may well be asked, can there be between a viper and treacle? How came such a sweet substance to have such a venomous origin? Here we are introduced, in the way of explanation, to one of those strange superstitions that were exceedingly common in ancient times, when little else but foolish marvels filled the pages of natural history. It was a popular belief at one time, that the bite of the viper could only be cured by the application to the wound of a piece of the viper's flesh, or a decoction called *viper's wine*, or *Venice treacle*, made by boiling the flesh in some fluid or other. Galen, the celebrated Greek physician of Pergamos, who lived in the second century, describes the custom as very prevalent in his time. At Aquileia, under the patronage of

the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, he prepared a system of pharmacy, which he published under the name of *Theriaca*, in allusion to this superstition. The name given to the extraordinary electuary of viper's flesh was *theriakē*, from *therion*, a viper. By the usual process of alteration which takes place in the course of a few generations in words that are commonly used, *theriakē* became *theriac*. Then it was transformed into the diminutive *theriacle*, afterwards *triacle*, in which form it was used by Chaucer; and finally it assumed its present mode of spelling as early as the time of Milton and Waller. It changed its meaning and application with its various changes of form, signifying first the confection of the viper's flesh applied to the wound inflicted by the viper's sting; then any antidote, whatever might be its nature, or whatever might be the origin of the evil it was intended to cure. Dr. Johnson, in the edition of his Dictionary published in 1805, defines treacle as "a medicine made up of many ingredients," and quotes in illustration of this definition a sentence from Boyle: "The physician that has observed the medicinal virtues of treacle without knowing the nature of the sixty odd ingredients, may cure many patients with it;" and another from Fleger: "Treacle-water has much of an acid in it." Afterwards, medical prescriptions came to be prepared in some vehicle intended to cover their nauseous taste or disagreeable look; and this vehicle was generally some kind of sweet syrup or sugary confection to which the name of *treacle* was applied. When the viscous substance known as "molasses" was imported from the

West Indies, it formed a welcome addition to the old limited list of vehicles for medicine; and so completely did it usurp the name of treacle, that very few are aware that the word ever had any other meaning or application.

Throughout our English literature we find frequent allusions to treacle in the symbolical sense of an antidote against evil; allusions which, without the foregoing explanation of the origin of the word, would be utterly unintelligible to the great majority of readers. In one of the early editions of the English Bible, the familiar text in Jeremiah, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" is rendered, "Is there no treacle in Gilead?" Sir Thomas More has this expression, "A most strong treacle against those venomous heresies." Chaucer says of our Lord, "Christ, which that is to every harm *triacle;*" and Lydgate, the "monk of Bury," a poet whose writings are now all but forgotten, has a kindred idea, which is expressed in these lines:—

> "There is no *venom*, so parlious in sharpnes,
> As when it hath of *treacle* a likenes."

Waller wrote a poem on the occasion of the restoration of Charles II., in which he speaks of the marvellous change that would be produced by the event upon the views and conduct of the former enemies of his royal master. He thus addresses the king:—

> "Offenders now, the chiefest, do begin
> To strive for grace and expiate their sin;
> All winds blow fair that did the world embroil,
> Your vipers *treacle* yield, and scorpions oil."

As if he had said in plain prose, that even those who

had slain the king's father had now repented of their sin and become loyal to the son, like vipers which had inflicted a painful wound, but now yielded by their flesh a medicine to heal it. Milton, too, who made everything subservient to his purpose, employed this curious old legend to point his language, for he speaks of "the sovran *treacle* of sound doctrine." Many other instances might be quoted; but these are sufficient to show how familiar the early English writers were with the symbolical use of treacle, and how admirably they extracted the moral from the once popular superstition.

The fundamental principle that gave origin to treacle was one that was extensively adopted and acted upon in ancient times. *Similia similibus curantur*—"Like cures like"—was the motto of nearly all the medical practitioners from Galen downwards. What were called *sympathetic ointments*, supposed to cure wounds if the weapons that inflicted them were smeared with them, without any application to the wounds themselves—were everywhere greatly in request. Prescriptions as a rule were founded upon some real or fancied resemblance between the remedy prescribed and the organ diseased—almost never upon the inherent curative property of the medicine. Lichens, which lead a mysterious mesmerized or suspended existence, and grow in curious situations where enchanters might weave their unhallowed spells, were favourite remedies for mysterious complaints. The lungwort, a kind of lichen which grows in immense shaggy masses on trees and rocks in subalpine woods, was highly recommended as an infallible cure for all diseases

of the lungs, owing to the resemblance between its reticulated and lobed upper surface, of a greyish brown colour, and these delicate human organs. Hundreds of similar instances might be given, in which the colour and shape of a remedy were everything, and its medicinal virtue nothing. The object, whether animal, vegetable, or mineral, that caused the disorder, contributed the proper medicament for its cure. In the writings of Paracelsus and Aldrovandus, who combined the study of alchemy and other occult sciences with that of medicine, we find constant reference to such nostrums; and numerous recipes are given for ointments, draughts and applications, made up according to this rule of the most extraordinary substances, which were sold for very large sums, and were said to have effected remarkable cures. In short, almost all the drugs of the mediæval pharmacopœia were selected and administered entirely upon this principle of mutual similarity between remedy and disease. A perusal of the medical treatises of our ancestors leaves upon our minds a very decided impression of the power of the human imagination, and the strength of the human constitution, as well as quickens our gratitude that we live in times when treacle is given as treacle, and not as viper's flesh, or some abomination more disgusting still.

There are traces in the Bible of the principle of treacle as applied in the cure of disease, which are exceedingly interesting and instructive. Some of the most remarkable of our Lord's miracles were based upon it. We are told by St. Mark of the healing of a man deaf and dumb

in Galilee, by our Saviour putting his fingers to his ears and touching his tongue with his own spittle. *Saliva jejuna* was supposed by the ancients to possess general curative properties, and to be especially efficacious in ophthalmia and other inflammatory diseases of the eyes. Pliny, in his Natural History, speaks of this therapeutic virtue in high terms; and both Tacitus and Suetonius record the case of a blind man who was supposed to have been cured of his blindness by the Emperor Vespasian, through the application of an eye-salve made of spittle. We are not, however, to suppose for a moment that our Lord was misled by this popular notion, and that He was here acting merely as an ordinary physician acquainted with certain remedies in use among men. It was not for its medicinal virtue that He made use of the spittle. The application of it was entirely a symbolical action, indicating that as it was the man's tongue that was bound, so the moisture of the tongue was to be the sign of its unloosing, and the means by which it would be enabled to move freely in the mouth, and to articulate words. And the use of Christ's own saliva in the cure showed that the healing virtue resided in and came forth from Christ's own body alone, and was imparted through loss of His substance. A somewhat similar example of the same principle may be seen in the opening of the eyes of the man born blind. The use of clay as a healing plaster was not altogether unknown. Serenus Samonicus, a Roman physician in the time of Caracalla, who wrote a poem upon medicine, says in it, "If an unwonted tumour arise in empty pride, besmear thy swollen eyes

all over with loathsome mire." But this healing power of clay was limited to the mere alleviation of inflammations, tumours, &c. It could have had no effect whatever in giving sight to the blind. Our Lord used the clay made of His own spittle as a conductor or channel, not in itself needed, by which His power might be conveyed, and the man's weak faith strengthened by something sacramental or external. It is dust that most frequently hurts and blinds the eye; our Lord therefore took dust and moulded it with His own spittle into clay, as a remedy for healing the eye and restoring the lost vision.

But we must not confine the application of the principle under consideration to the few cases recorded in the Gospels, in which our Lord made use of an outward remedy, having some analogy with the disease, as the vehicle or treacle of His miraculous power. All Christ's miracles, without exception, were in one sense illustrations of the principle. The effects of the curse in the diseases and disabilities of mankind were removed by Christ bearing the curse while performing the miracles. "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." The evil that He cured He suffered in His own soul. The sorrow that He alleviated cost Himself an equal degree of sorrow. Virtue went out of Him in proportion to the amount of healing virtue imparted. Gain to others was loss to Him. By fasting and prayer He cast out unclean spirits; by groaning in spirit and weeping He raised the dead Lazarus to life. The curse that He removed He came under Himself; so that in this sense Chaucer's words, already quoted, are wonderfully significant and

applicable—"Christ, which that is to every harm triacle." So also in the miracle of healing the nauseous fountain at Jericho by Elisha. The water was brackish and bitter, and the prophet put into it the pungent and bitter salt. This in ordinary circumstances would only have made matters worse, and spoiled irretrievably instead of improving the quality of the water. But in this case the salt made the salt spring permanently sweet, and fit for drinking or irrigation, and it was an emblem, as the great preservative of nature, of purity and incorruptibility.

We see the principle of *treacle*, not only in the miracles, but also in the parables, of Scripture, especially in those acted or dramatic parables of the Old Testament, in which the prophets entered so deeply into the spirit of their mission as to be identified with it. Saul laid hold of the skirt of Samuel's mantle as he turned indignantly away from him, and it rent, and the prophet said to the unhappy king, "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thou." Ahijah the Shilonite rent his new garment in twelve pieces in the presence of Jeroboam, and he said to him, "Take thee ten pieces; for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee." Jeremiah concealed his girdle in a hole of a rock near the Euphrates, and, digging it up again after many days, found it marred and rotten and profitable for nothing—as a token that thus the pride of Judah and Jerusalem should be marred. Hananiah took the yoke from off

the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it in the presence of all the people, as a proof that so the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, should be broken from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years. Agabus took the girdle of Paul, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, "So shall the Jews of Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." But the most striking and impressive form of these acted parables was that exhibited by Isaiah, when he walked naked and barefoot for three years, that by this symbol he might show to the Israelites that the king of Assyria would lead away the Egyptian prisoners and the Ethiopian captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, to the shame of Egypt. Of the same kind was the marriage of Hosea with an adulteress, in token that by her expiation might be shown the desolation and the restoration of Israel; and also the death of Ezekiel's wife, for which he was forbidden to mourn, as symbolical of the unlamented destruction of the temple of Jerusalem, and the death of the Jewish sons and daughters by the sword. The names, too, of Isaiah's sons, Shear-jashub, or *the remnant shall return*, and Maher-shalal-hash-baz, or *make haste to the spoil and hasten the prey*, were for signs and for wonders in Israel, from the Lord of hosts which dwelleth in Mount Zion.

In the economy of redemption we find many remarkable examples of the principle of treacle. The rule that "like cures like" is engraved on the very forefront of our salvation. It is shadowed forth in type and

symbol; it is foretold in prophecy; it is clearly seen in realized fact. The brazen serpent was lifted up by Moses in the wilderness to heal those who were bitten by the fiery serpents, as a prophetic symbol that the Son of man would be lifted up on the cross to heal those who had been deceived into sin by the old serpent, the devil. And in this type there was a significant fitness. It was not an actual dead serpent that was exhibited; for that would have implied that Christ was really sinful. It was a brazen serpent, formed of the brass of which the brazen altar and the brazen laver were made, in token that though Christ was our substitute, He was yet holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Throughout the whole of our Saviour's propitiatory work, we can trace this similarity between the evil and the cure; a similarity indicated very plainly and emphatically in the first announcement of the scheme of redemption to our fallen first parents. The serpent's head could only be bruised through the heel of the woman's seed being wounded by the serpent's fang. By faithlessness and pride, man sinned and fell; by treachery, false witness, and a cross, man is redeemed. It was not as God that Christ wrought out man's salvation, but as man. "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same." It was in the likeness of sinful flesh that He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. On the day of atonement, He was represented by the scapegoat; and this is the symbol of the wicked,

who shall be the goats on the left of the throne on the day of judgment. He who knew no sin was made sin —yea, a curse—for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He was made under the law, that He might redeem us from its curse. Through death He destroyed him that had the power of death; that is, the devil. It is by His blood that our blood-guiltiness is washed away. It is by His poverty that our poverty is enriched. It is by His humiliation that our humiliation is exalted. It is by His stripes that our stripes are healed. It is by His death that our death is quickened into life.

So also, in order that we may realize personally and individually the benefits of Christ's redemption, we must be identified with Him by faith; there must be mutual sympathy, partnership, and reciprocity of feeling—"I in you, and ye in Me." We must be partakers of His nature as He was partaker of ours. We must take up our cross and follow Him. We must know the fellowship of His sufferings. If we be planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection; if we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him. To the unbeliever there seems the same inadequacy between cause and effect in this salvation from the curse by means of the cross, that there appears to us in the old mediæval cures by the treacle which vipers yield. The men of Jericho might have ridiculed the prophet's attempt to heal the bitter fountain by his cruse of salt. The serpent-bitten Israelites might have refused to look at the brazen serpent, deeming it a foolish and impotent charm. Had

both of these allowed themselves to reason upon the improbability of the desired result being accomplished by such means, had they been swayed by the opinions or speculations of men, the fountain, in the one case, would have flowed for ever in all its bitterness, and the Israelites, in the other case, would have perished in their torment. And so Christ crucified may be to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. The salvation of God may not be suitable and adequate in the eyes of man. "What special virtue," he may say, "is there in the sufferings and death of a poor Jew eighteen hundred years ago, to atone for my sins and make my peace with God? The whole system is just a repetition of the mediæval superstition, and is therefore offensive, incredible, and impracticable." So have many argued, and died in their sins. God says, "There is no other name given under heaven among men by whom we can be saved, but the name of Jesus." The deadly bite of the serpent of sin can only be cured by looking unto Him who is lifted up on the cross. The fountain of sin and death can only be healed by the salt of Christ's redemption; and putting in the sugared sweets of our own devices and plans of salvation and good works will never change its bitterness; but it will flow a fountain of death for ever for us.

In medicine also the same principle may be found. Homœopathy was anticipated by the ancient use of treacle. The essential character of Hahnemann's famous system is that such remedies should be employed against any disease, as in a healthy person would produce a

similar, though not precisely the same disease. The method of administering remedies in infinitesimal doses is not necessarily a part of the system, and it was not originally practised, although in the end it was adopted as a vital article of the creed. The fundamental principle of homœopathy is that "like cures like;" and, to find suitable medicines against any disease, experiments are made on healthy persons, in order to determine the effect upon them. Thus hooping-cough and certain eruptions of the skin of a chronic nature are supposed to be cured by an attack of measles; inflammation of the eyes, asthma, and dysentery, are homœopathically cured by small-pox; arnica heals bruises because it produces the nervous symptoms which accompany bruises; camphor cures typhus fever because in a poisonous dose it lowers the vitality of the system; wine is a good remedy for inflammation because it inflames the constitution; quinine or Peruvian bark is the best remedy against intermittent fever or ague because, when taken in considerable quantity by a healthy person, it produces feverishness and furred tongue; and so on over a long list of medicines. The doctrine of homœopathy has been held up to ridicule and assailed with every conceivable argument by the disciples of the Hippocratic or allopathic system. It does not lie in my province to judge between the opponents. There are numerous analogies in medicine—this every medical man will allow; but whether they are sufficiently numerous and exact to found a scientific system upon them, is a question that is by no means settled to the satisfaction of all. It is a fact dis-

puted by no one, that certain remedies resemble, in their operation upon the healthy body, the diseases they were employed to cure. Vaccination, for instance, is universally practised as a prophylactic or preventive remedy against small-pox; the vaccine disease being a local, less dangerous and non-infectious form of small-pox. Many of the febrile diseases have a mysterious and inexplicable power of protecting, within certain limits, against a recurrence of them. Those who take measles, small-pox, typhus, yellow fever, and other complaints of that class, very seldom indeed have another attack of the same kind throughout the whole course of their lives. Certain medicines are administered to produce one disease or unnatural condition of the system, in order to remove another. The evil that has deranged the body in many instances can only be healed by another evil that will temporarily derange it. A very popular mode of taking the pain out of a burn is to expose the injured part as long as possible to the fire; and it is well known that the only safe way of restoring animation to a frost-bitten limb is by rubbing it with snow or putting it in ice-cold water. Both the homœopathic and allopathic principles of medicine coincide in certain cases. Bromine, introduced into the respiratory organs, causes false membranes to be formed in the larynx of pigeons. In croup and diphtheria it has therefore been found to act as a useful remedy—first hardening the adventitious membrane, and then reducing it to dust. Taking a mere outside general view of the healing art, like does to some extent cure like. It is the bitter medicine that cures the

bitter disease. All medicines are nauseous, because all illness is nauseous.

There is a profound philosophy in this principle of *treacle* that applies to all the relations and interests of life. In the sweat of a man's face does he take away the curse that causes his face to sweat. Not by ease and idleness and self-indulgence does a man remove the remediable evils of the world; but by the evils of toil and trouble and care. It is the tear of sympathy that dries the tear of sorrow; the salt of the grief that springs from fellow-feeling that heals the salt spring of the grief that flows from human bereavement. We all know the relief to imprisoned feeling with which the heart is bursting—when we can find one whose susceptibilities can take it in as we outpour it all, who can understand our emotions and take interest in our disclosures. There is no earthly solace like that; and it is only a higher degree of it that we experience when we feel that we have "a brother born for adversity," who is afflicted in all our afflictions. That "Jesus wept,"—that He still sheds tears as salt and as round as ours—when He sees us sorrowing; this is the blessed homœopathy of suffering—this is the balm, the treacle to every heart-wound. Then, too, why is repentance bitter? Is it not because sin is bitter? Those who have experienced it describe the exquisite painfulness with which life and vigour return to a frozen limb—or animation to a body that has been nearly drowned, when the remedies used have been successful. The pain of recovery is somewhat like the pain through which sensibility and consciousness

in either case were lost. Thus it is in all moral recoveries from sin. The soul yields to temptation with pain, and reluctance, and much self-upbraiding at first; and it is only a long-continued course of evil that blunts and deadens its sensibilities, so that it is beneath and beyond shame. But when it comes to itself—when it realizes, like the prodigal, what it is and what it has lost—the revulsion of feeling is great. It revives to the consciousness of the higher and truer life from which it has degraded itself, with a keenness of remorse greater even than it experienced when it first fell. The tides of better feeling and heavenlier impulse flow with difficulty and pain through channels long empty, or clogged up with base and sinful tendencies. Conviction and conversion, whether on the lower levels of ordinary moral conduct and worldly well-being, or on the higher heights of spiritual life and Gospel experience, must always be attended with acute sorrow; and the measure of the pain in the loss of the soul must be the measure of the pain in its recovery and gain. Look again at love. What does it require? Is it wealth, or rank, or fame, or any of the outward possessions and glories of life? The Song of Songs says, and the experience of every true loving heart echoes the sentiment, "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." Love can only be satisfied with love. And should not our own experience of this convince us that the surpassing, ineffable Love that gave up His own Son for us, demands from us in return, and can only be satisfied with, a love that will sacrifice self

for Him? And finally, does not the principle in question lead us by all these steps to the great universal Throne itself? Does it not clearly indicate that, as God has made us in His own likeness, so we can only be satisfied when we awake with His likeness? He has made us with a nature so God-like that no creature—no gift that He can bestow—nothing but God Himself, can fill the craving hollow of our being. The prayer of Philip, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," is the unconscious longing of every soul. No other blessedness can suffice us. This is indeed the *sovran treacle* of sound doctrine; the perfect catholicon for all evils; and blessed are those who know in their experience the reality which it expresses—who know the Father in the Son, whom thus to know is life everlasting.

CHAPTER VII.

FEEDING ON ASHES.

"He feedeth on ashes."—ISAIAH xliv. 20.

ONE of the most extraordinary examples of depraved or perverted appetite is the use of earth for food. This propensity is not an occasional freak, but a common custom, and is found among so large a number and variety of tribes, that it may be regarded as coextensive with the human race. From time immemorial, the Chinese have been in the habit of using various kinds of edible earth as substitutes for bread in times of scarcity; and their imperial annals have always religiously noticed the discovery of such bread-stones, or stone-meal, as they are called. On the western coast of Africa a yellowish kind of earth, called *caouac*, is so highly relished and so constantly consumed by the negroes, that it has become to them a necessary of life. In the island of Java, and in various parts of the hill-country of India, a reddish earth is baked into cakes and sold in the village markets for food; while on the banks of the Orinoco, in South America, Humboldt mentions that the native Indians find a species of unctuous clay, which they knead into

balls, and store up in heaps in their huts as a provision for the winter or rainy season. They are not compelled by famine to have recourse to this clay; for even when fish, game, and fruit are plentiful, they still eat it after their food as a luxury. This practice of eating earth is not confined solely to the inhabitants of the Tropics. In the North of Norway and in Swedish Lapland a kind of white powdery earth, called mountain-meal, found under beds of decayed moss, is consumed in immense quantities every year. It is mixed by the people with their bread in times of scarcity; and even in Germany it has been frequently used as a means of allaying hunger. All these examples of the use of earth as food are so contrary to our experience, that they might seem incredible were it not that they are thoroughly authenticated. Such an unnatural custom must in the long run prove injurious to the constitution of those who indulge in it, although it is wonderful how long it can be carried on by some individuals apparently with impunity.

I have described this extraordinary habit so fully, because it affords an apt illustration of the inspired words at the head of this chapter. Just as in the natural world there are many whose perverted appetites lead them to the use of earth as food, so in the spiritual world there are many who, in the language of Isaiah, feed upon ashes. The prophet is speaking of the idolater, and exposing the senselessness of idol-worship. The poor devotee takes a piece of durable wood, it may be of his own planting, carves it into a human likeness, or into the resemblance of some material object, and sets it up in a shrine in his

own house for adoration. With the chips and shavings he makes a fire and cooks his food. He thus practically proves his god to be identical in substance and essence with his fuel. It is his own capricious choice, his own handiwork alone, that determines the difference between the part of the tree which he worships and the part which he burns on his hearth. He satisfies his bodily hunger with the food prepared by the glowing ashes of the idol-wood. He feeds the hunger of his soul with the ashes of his material idolatry. A deceived soul has turned him aside from the knowledge and service of the living and true God, who feeds His worshippers with the finest of the wheat; and he tries to find in the very same materials with which he cooks his food what will appease the cravings of his spiritual nature.

"He feedeth on ashes." Three topics for meditation are suggested by these significant words:—1st, Who is the idolater?—*He* feedeth on ashes. 2ndly, What is his idolatry?—He *feedeth* on ashes. And, 3rdly, How does idolatry affect him?—He feedeth on *ashes*.

1. In the first place, then, let us ask who is the idolater—who is the "he" that is said in the text to feed on ashes? The prophet Isaiah had a definite audience before him. He was prophesying to the children of Israel, whose proneness to idolatry was so remarkable, that they are mentioned in the Bible as the only people who voluntarily forsook their own God, to cleave to the false gods of the nations with whom from time to time they came into contact. Notwithstanding the purity and sublimity of their own monotheistic creed,

and the awful threatenings and sanctions with which it was guarded, we can trace throughout their entire history, as a marked feature of their character, a propensity to blend a theoretical belief in the true God with an accommodating reverence to the idols of the heathen Pantheon. Except when under the immediate spell of some special revelation of Jehovah, they craved for some visible shape or outward sign of the divinity—a craving which was satisfied for a time by the erection of the tabernacle and temple, and the establishment of the worship connected with them, but which soon overleaped barriers thus imposed upon it, and sought for novel sensations in the tabernacle of Moloch and in the star of the god Remphan—figures which they made to worship them. The very priests and Levites, who were most concerned in keeping the worship of Jehovah pure, were the leaders of the various national apostasies. The grandson of Moses himself assumed the office of priest to the images of Micah; and all the solemn feasts, sacrifices, and institutions of the Mosaic ritual were copied in detail by Jeroboam, and applied to the worship of the golden calves which he had erected at Bethel and Dan. Under the patronage of royalty, idolatrous priests from time to time multiplied in the land, and increased in wealth and influence. Images were set up in the threshing-floors, in the wine-vats, and behind the doors of private houses; and intermarriages with the surrounding nations were, in every case, the first steps to the worship of their gods. Isaiah deeply deplored this national fickleness and spiritual inconstancy. In the passage under considera-

tion he does not expose, as elsewhere, the heinousness of idolatry as a political crime of the gravest kind against Jehovah as the civil head of the State, or as the greatest of social wrongs against Him with whom they had entered into the marriage-bond. Instead of launching the fiercest invectives of his wrath against it, he seeks to overwhelm it with contempt. He shows in remarkably searching language the degrading nature of the practice, and its contrariety alike to right reason and true piety.

Were Isaiah addressing us in these days, his ideas would be the same, though the form in which he would present them would be different. Material idolatry, in its literal import, has passed away among civilized nations. The old worship of stocks and stones is now impossible among a professedly Christian people. The second commandment, so far as it refers to the worship of graven or molten images, is unnecessary. But although the outward mode has passed away, the essence of the temptation remains the same. Human society is changed, but human nature is unchanged. The impulse which led to idolatry is therefore as strong at the present day as it was in the time of Isaiah; and images are set up and worshipped now as fantastic as any pagan fetish or joss. The tender and solemn admonition of the Apostle John is as needful as ever: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." The New Testament form of the second commandment, "Be not conformed to this world," requires to be frequently and urgently enforced. Idolatry in its essence is the lowering of the idea of God and of God's nature, and the exaltation of a dead image above

a man's own living spirit; and an idol is whatever is loved more than God, whatever is depended upon for happiness and help independent of God. And just as there were different kinds of material idolaters of old, so there are now different kinds of spiritual idolaters. There were worshippers of Baal and Astarte, the gods of sensualism; and these are now represented by the multitudes who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God—who seek enjoyment in what is distinctively called pleasure, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. There were worshippers of the golden calf; and these are now represented by those who love riches, who admire only worldly success in others, and exalt themselves on account of it; who embark their whole soul in their business, and make it their one chief solicitude. There were nobler worshippers of the sun, moon, and stars; and these are now represented by the lovers of knowledge, by the devotees of literature and science, who make Nature their deity, and this globe the temple in which they adore her. But if I were to sum up all spiritual idolatry in these days in one form, I should call it *worldliness*, for everything else is but a phase of this. Some modern idolaters exhibit one phase of worldliness, some another, but all have it more or less; and even the children of light too frequently and fervently unite in the worship, and require the reproof: "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world." In short, the man to whom the words of the prophet are applicable nowadays, is the man who moulds his life and character, his spirit and conscience, not by the high ideals of God and

heaven, but by the objects and pursuits of the world, by things that are lower than his own nature. And this worldly conformity leads speedily, in most instances, to a low moral standard, and to a weak and corrupt form of religion, and produces the same humiliating results which flowed from the idolatry of ancient times. Even as they do not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gives them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient.

2. But I pass on to consider, in the *second* place, what is idolatry. "He *feedeth* on ashes." Adopting the analogy of the sacred writer, I should say it is a perverted spiritual appetite. In certain diseased states of the brain there is an unnatural craving for the most extraordinary and unwholesome substances. Men and women under such morbid influences have been known to eat cinders and sand with apparent relish, and even to prefer them to the richest dainties. In such cases it is not the appetite that is at fault. That is sound and good. The digestive organs exercise their functions naturally and healthfully. But the controlling power of the brain which chooses the proper food is impaired, and this healthy appetite is set to work upon substances which are altogether unsuitable. In like manner, idolatry arises from a natural craving of the soul, which was made for God, for His worship and enjoyment. It was formed to know, and love, and serve a Being higher than itself. It finds that it must go out of itself and beyond itself for the blessedness that it needs. Not more eagerly does the plant, imprisoned in the dark cellar, turn its blossom to the ray of solar light that reaches

it through a crevice in the wall, than do the thousand tendrils of our spiritual nature stretch themselves out towards a Being higher, holier, and more enduring than ourselves. There is a thirst in us that dries up all earthly things, and a hunger that craves for fuller joys. Now, this spiritual appetite is a God-given instinct of our nature. It is the soul seeking its highest good. It is healthy and natural. But when, under the guidance and power of a deceived heart, it seeks its gratification in earthly things to the exclusion altogether of God, it affords a most melancholy example of a perverted spiritual appetite. The *longing* that makes us worship idols, whether it be molten or graven images, or the more worthy and dignified idols of the heart—the home, the world, the sanctuary, our friends, our possessions, ourselves—is in itself a right, and healthy, and natural instinct; the sin of idolatry consists in the *perversion* of this longing, in the worshipping of the creature instead of, or more than, the Creator. Originally the spiritual appetite was under an enlightened moral control, by which it sought its gratification in adequate and proper means. Man sought God in everything, and everything in God. But when he sinned and fell, while retaining the desire after God and the capacity of enjoying Him, he lost the right direction of the desire. His spiritual appetite became depraved and vitiated; his fine moral instinct became blunted, so that the happiness he used to find in the infinite excellence and uncreated all-sufficiency of God, he now sought vainly in the vanities and pleasures of sense. He turned away from the rich and nourishing provision of his Father's house

to feed as a prodigal upon the husks which the swine do eat.

What is drunkenness? Traced to its source and motive, we find that this degrading vice originates in an unconscious craving of the soul after God. It is a perverted spiritual appetite, a feeding on ashes instead of bread. Why does a man get intoxicated? Is it not because he is dissatisfied with the mean life of worldliness and carnality which he leads, and pants after a higher life and a freer atmosphere? It is only by drinking the poisonous cup, he thinks, that he can escape from the miseries of his position, from the cares and sorrows that dwarf his soul and wear down his nature to their own low level, and live for a brief interval in an ideal world. This is the motive, at least at first, although afterwards the vice becomes a mere habit, and is indulged in for its own sake. Drunkenness is a perverted spiritual appetite, a seeking in the creature what God alone can give, the longing of the soul for higher and purer happiness than the hard round of daily life and the weary sorrowful circle of the world can give. So, too, covetousness, if analysed in the same way, will be found to be a perverted spiritual appetite, a misdirected worship. Covetousness is identified in Scripture with idolatry: "Covetousness which is idolatry," says St. Paul. "No covetous man, who is an idolater, hath an inheritance in the kingdom of God." The love of money, as it has been well said, is the love of God run wild, the diseased action of a spiritual appetite, the aberration of a nature that was made for God, and is still unconsciously seeking

after Him. Mammon-worship is the semblance or counterfeit of God-worship. Wealth is the mystic shadow of God, which the soul is unconsciously groping after and craving for. It presents some faint features of resemblance to Him. It seems omnipotent, able to do all things; omnipresent, showing signs of itself everywhere; beneficent, supplying our present wants, providing for our future, procuring for us an endless variety of blessings, and giving us almost all that our hearts can desire. And because it presents these superficial resemblances to God, because it thus mimics His infinitude, it becomes a religion to many, a worship loud in praise and aspiration as any that ever filled a church. The blindness of such devotion is equal to its fervour. Even when most abject in his worship, the idolater of wealth will tell you in excuse that the throned deity which claims the homage of his knee "the likeness of a kingly crown has on." And so is it with every form of idolatry of which man in these enlightened days can be guilty. It is the soul, in its restless pursuit of happiness, mistaking the true object of which it is in quest. It is the soul, with its healthy God-given appetite, feeding upon ashes instead of upon bread, seeking its food in created things instead of in the Creator. God made man upright, with a healthy spiritual appetite that sought its portion and fruition in Him only. But, deceived by sin, man sought out many inventions, prepared many idols, invented many pleasures which should be to him substitutes for God, which should appease his deep longings for God. And thus

the very wants and miseries, the very woes and vices of man, proclaim the greatness of his nature—indicate that he is too mighty a being for this perishable world.

3. But let us see, in the *third* place, what are the effects of idolatry. How does idolatry affect the man guilty of it? There is a very striking and beautiful relation, as it has been well said, between the food of man and his digestive organs. He is omnivorous. He is the ruler of the world, and therefore the varied life of the world must throb in his veins. Nature spreads a table for him, richly furnished with everything that can please the eye, regale the nostril, and satisfy the palate; opens her bounteous hand, and pours out for him the treasures of every land and every sea, because she would give him a wide and vigorous life co-extensive with the variety of nature. But all the varied food which she presents to him must be *organic* food. It must be prepared for him by previous vegetable or animal life. It must not come from the earth directly; it must be organized by passing through the tissues, and becoming endowed with new properties in the structures of plants and animals. It is true, indeed, that the human body requires for its proper nourishment inorganic as well as organic elements. Formed from the dust, it does not even in its most sublimated processes utterly forsake the ground. "Phosphorus literally flames in the brain that thoughts may breathe and words may burn; lime gives solidity to the bones; the alkaline salts promote the oxidation and removal of the effete materials of the body. Common minerals—iron, sulphur, soda, potash, and others—circu-

late in the blood, or are garnered in the various tissues. But all these inorganic materials are furnished, not from the earth directly, but in the food ; the various vegetable and animal products containing them in varying quantities." Such being the law of man's nutrition, it will be seen at once that if he feeds directly upon ashes, he is feeding upon substances that are altogether incongruous, and unfitted to nourish him. The plant can feed upon ashes—the worm can feed upon earth—but man's life is higher and more complex, and therefore he requires a more complex food. His organs cannot digest or assimilate ashes. They remain unchanged in his stomach, to impair its powers, and to cause it torture and distress. If a healthy stomach be made to digest a mineral substance, it acts in the same manner as it would do in the case of bread,—it exercises all its functions, and secretes all its juices as naturally as if the foreign substance were its appropriate diet, but its action is only a throe of distress. And is not the analogy between spiritual and natural things here very clear? If man's spiritual appetite can feed only on God—if God alone is the satisfying portion of the soul—then if that appetite is set to work upon the ashes of idolatry—if man seeks his portion only in the things of the world,—what can you expect but spiritual indigestion and misery? And the healthier the spiritual appetite, the more pain will be inflicted by this perversion of it. It is true, indeed, that just as the body requires inorganic elements—salt, lime, and iron—as well as organic, for its proper nourishment, so man requires the things of the world as well as the things of

faith for his spiritual welfare. Our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of these earthly things even for our growth in grace. A soul nourished exclusively upon spiritual things, would be as weak and worthless as a body nourished exclusively upon organized materials, upon chemically prepared food. But then we are to seek these temporal things—earthly enjoyments and pursuits—not directly from the world, but through the channel of communion with God, and living in Him, just as the body gets its needful supply of earthy materials, not directly from the earth, but through the medium of the plants and animals upon which it feeds. We are to seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added thereto.

There are natures that, by a long course of feeding upon ashes, have become accustomed to this unnatural diet. Like the clay-eaters of South America, their digestive organs become assimilated to their food, and they are put to little inconvenience by it. We meet with persons who are satisfied with their portion in this world, who mind earthly things, and are contented with the nourishment for their souls which they find in them. But are such persons the truly great and noble ones of our race? Do we admire or love them? Do we not regard their contentment as a curse, as the proofs of a low moral nature? Is not, as one has said, the instinctive feeling strong within us, that to be thus satisfied—wanting nothing, craving nothing but what can be found in the pursuits and enjoyments of earth—is inhuman; that those whose horizon is thus all earth-bound are not

above but below the level of humanity. But whatever may be the case with such individuals, the great mass of idolaters—the great mass of those who are seeking their happiness in created good—are wretched because they are feeding on ashes. They are trying to find satisfaction for the longing of their souls for God in things that are unfitted by their very nature to yield that satisfaction. Their longing for God is a healthy appetite; and therefore the more misery and pain does it inflict when it is set to work to digest the crude earthy substances of the world. This is the true secret of the unhappiness of the great majority of mankind. They are without God, and, therefore, necessarily without hope in the world. They are suffering from spiritual indigestion. Their souls are crying for bread, and they get a stone; and in endeavouring to assimilate the heterogeneous substance, to find strength and satisfaction in it, they are undergoing agonies of disappointment and sorrow. "The ease of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them."

The debaucheries of lust and drunkenness and gluttony to which so many flee to gratify the hunger of their souls separated from God, in whom alone they can live and move and have their being, are ashes that fill them only to torture them; that allay for a moment the pangs of hunger only to inflict pangs of disease a thousand times worse. The cares and toils; the constant changing of plans and places; the pursuit of wealth, honour, society, fame, knowledge, fashion;—these are all proofs of spiritual dyspepsia, of the uneasiness which the soul feels in

the digestion of food never intended for it, and therefore utterly unsuited to its nature and wants. The perpetual irritations; the fits of anger, envy, jealousy, and remorse; the gloomy, hypochondriacal fears; the weary carking anxieties; the vanity and vexation of spirit which disturb and distract the lives of multitudes, are owing to the presence in their souls of foreign bodies which they can neither assimilate nor reject. They call the world ashes; they wonder at the meanness and destitution of life; they fret and fume at the dispensations of Providence. But renewed pursuit ever succeeds deplored deception; and the wretched experiment is again and again repeated with increased results of bitterness and woe. However well they get on in the world, and amass fame and wealth and honour, they are never pleased. Even amid the surfeits of earth's richest feasts of joy, they are wringing their hands and crying out, "Who will show us any good?" They spend their lives in the pursuit of this and that outward good, impelled by the insatiable longings of a deceived heart; "confessing all the time that they fail even when in form they succeed, and showing by their symptoms of disappointment and dissatisfaction that their objects, whether gained or lost, have no relation to their wants." They spend money for that which is not bread, and labour for that which satisfieth not. Feeding on ashes only, what can we expect but to see them miserable and starving? How can a spiritual appetite be satisfied by a material regimen? How can an infinite hunger be appeased by a finite good? The soul wants organized

food; food that has spiritual life in it; food that is redolent of the sunshine and permeated with the light of heaven; food that has drunk in all the impalpable virtues and forces of the things unseen and eternal; food that can gather up in itself these vitalizing influences, and transfer them to us to glow within our veins and animate our nerves; and, instead of that, we get ashes out of which all the glow and the virtue have departed. Sooner or later, as Moses pounded the golden calf and gave the Israelites the dust to drink in punishment of their idolatry, will every worshipper of false gods have to drink the dust of his idols. Our sin will become our punishment; our idols our scourges. God is a jealous God; and every soul that turneth aside from His love to the lying vanities of the world, must drink the bitter water of jealousy, filled with the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle—the dust of the bruised and mutilated Dagons of spiritual idolatry that have fallen before the ark of Jehovah; and it shall enter into him, and his belly shall swell and his thigh shall rot, and he shall be a curse among the people. "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks, walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have at my hand: ye shall lie down in sorrow."

I have remarked that there are some who are satisfied with their worldly portion—who, though feeding upon clay, are not put to inconvenience by it. Such individuals, in the midst of their contentment, are in reality, if they only knew it, more to be pitied than those whose

truer instincts are tortured by the unsuitable food by which they endeavour to appease their spiritual cravings. Oh, it is infinitely better not to have found satisfaction at all—to be as miserable as the world can make us—than to be feeding upon ashes contentedly! For we may rest assured that such food is doing harm to our spiritual constitution, making us more and more like what we eat—of the earth earthy—and all the more surely that it excites no symptoms of pain, and seems to agree with our nature. The peasant women of Styria are in the habit of constantly eating a certain quantity of arsenic, in order to enhance their personal charms. It imparts a beautiful bloom to the complexion, and gives a full and rounded appearance to the face and body. For years they persevere in this dangerous practice; but if they intermit it for a single day, they experience all the symptoms of arsenical poisoning. The complexion fades, the features become worn and haggard, and the body loses its plumpness and becomes angular and emaciated. Having once begun, therefore, to use this cosmetic, they must in self-defence go on, constantly increasing the dose in order to keep up the effect. At last the constitution is undermined; the evil effects cannot be warded off any longer; the limit of safety is overpassed; and the victim of foolish vanity perishes miserably in the very prime of life. And is it not so with those who feed upon the poison of the world's idolatries? They may seem to thrive upon this insidious and dangerous diet. They may look as blooming upon it as Daniel upon his pulse, but all the time it is permanently impairing their spiritual health, and

rendering them unfit for spiritual communion. The more they indulge in it, the more they must surrender themselves to it; and the jaded appetite is stimulated on to greater excesses, until at last every lingering vestige of spiritual vitality is destroyed, and the soul becomes a loathsome moral wreck, poisoned by its own food.

There is such a thing as a wasting of the body from insufficient nutrition, even when the appetite is satisfied and the stomach content. A strange plant called the *nardoo,* with clover-like leaves, closely allied to the fern tribe, grows in the deserts of Central Australia. A melancholy interest is connected with it, owing to the fact that its seeds formed for several months almost the sole food of the party of explorers who a few years ago crossed the continent. This *nardoo* satisfied their hunger; it produced a pleasant feeling of comfort and repletion. The natives were accustomed to eat it in the absence of their usual roots and fruits, not only without injury, but apparently with positive benefit to their health. And yet, day after day, Burke and Wills became weaker and more emaciated upon this diet. Their flesh wasted from their bones, their strength was reduced to an infant's feebleness, and they could only crawl painfully a mile or two in a day. At last, when nearing the bourne of their hopes, the explorers perished one by one of starvation; a solitary survivor being found in the last extremity under a tree, where he had laid him down to die, by a party sent out in search of the missing expedition. When analysed, the *nardoo* bread was ascertained to be destitute of certain nutritious elements indispensable to the support of a

European, though an Australian savage might for a while find it beneficial as an alterative. And thus it happened that these poor unfortunate Englishmen perished of starvation, even while feeding fully day by day upon food that seemed to satisfy their hunger. Now, is it not precisely so in the experience of those who are seeking and finding their portion in earthly things? They are contented with it, and yet their hunger is in reality unappeased. Their desires are crowned, and yet they are actually perishing of want. God gives them their request, but sends leanness to their souls. Oh, is it not far more dreadful to perish by slow degrees of this spiritual atrophy, under the delusive belief that all is well, and therefore seeking no change of food, than to be tortured by the indigestion of feeding on ashes, if by this misery the poor victim can be urged to seek for food convenient for him!

"He feedeth on ashes." Is not the very term most significant? What are ashes? They are the last solid products of matter that has been used up—the relics that remain after all that is useful and nutritious has been consumed. You burn a piece of wood or a handful of corn, and its grosser particles fall to the ground, while all its ethereal parts—its carbon and hydrogen—mount to the skies and disappear. It is a sad thing to gaze upon the ashes of the commonest fire; for in them there is an image of utter death and ruin—of something that has been bright and beautiful, and is now but dull, cold, barren dust. And what are earthly, created things, upon which so many are feeding the hunger of their immortal

souls, but ashes? They were once bright and beautiful. God's blessing was upon them, and they were very good. But sin has consumed all their goodness and beauty, has burned up all in them that was capable of ministering to the spiritual wants of men, and left nothing behind but dust and ashes. We can apply this truth to all the world, so far as it is made the portion of the soul. Astronomers tell us that the earth was once a sun, its interior still glowing with the primeval heat; and that the various materials which compose its crust—the rocks, the earths, the seas—are the ashes of its conflagration—the dross that gathered on the surface of its liquid fire. The clays, and sands, and salts of the soil are the ashes of the oxidation or burning of metals. Every dead, inert substance in nature is the cold ash of a former fire; and the few active substances that have not yet mingled with oxygen, and so become consumed—so trivial in comparison with the total store of which they are the residue—constitute our main sources of heat and light and motive power. In short, everything in the world that will not burn, is something that has been already burned. And so in a moral sense, the whole world, which was once capable of ministering to man's spiritual wants, is now a mere heap of cinders. Its beauty has gone with its goodness, and its sufficing power with its holiness. It has become spiritually oxidized by combination with the all-devouring element of sin. The man that loves the world now feeds on ashes; not upon earth, for there is a degree of nourishment in soil, owing to the remains of former life, and the worm and the plant feed upon it;

—not upon clay, for the clay which the American Indians eat is found to consist of microscopic plants with silicious envelopes, called Diatoms, containing a small portion of organic matter sufficient to sustain existence;—no; but on dry, white, dusty ashes, utterly destitute of any nutritious element whatever, upon which no creature can live, and upon which almost no plant can grow—the refuse of everything that is good—salt that has lost its savour, and is therefore good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of man. Oh, could the worthlessness of the world as a portion be more graphically symbolized!

Poor worldly-minded man or woman! it is indeed a deceived heart that has turned you aside; it is indeed a deceiver that has seduced you to feed on ashes. The god of this world hath blinded you. He brings the power of the world, with all its seductiveness, to bear upon you as an antidote to the Gospel. He so dazzles your eyes with earthly glory, that you are blind to the glory of God which shines in the face of Jesus. The sentence pronounced upon the old serpent who deceived our first parents was, "Dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." Whatever may be the literal interpretation of that sentence, it is true in a metaphorical sense that Satan feeds upon dust. All his successes, all his enjoyments, are bitter and unsatisfying, and yield him no true pleasure. His proudest victories won in the world and in the heart of man are dry as dust, and utterly barren of enjoyment. And as he is himself, he wishes to make all who are led captive by him at his will. His own food he

gives them to eat, that his own nature may be developed in them. Satan attempted to make even our blessed Lord eat this wretched food. He said to Him, when fasting forty days in the waste wilderness, "Command that these stones be made bread." Defeated by Him who had meat to eat which the world knoweth not of—who lived not upon bread alone, but upon every word which cometh out of the mouth of God—Satan has from that time gone forth tempting poor hungry souls in the wilderness in the same way. Command that these stones of pleasure, of wealth, of fame, of success,—command that these stones be made bread, he says to every poor worldling, to every idolater. And, alas! how many obey him, and prove themselves to be of their father the devil. And so obeying him, they need not wonder that, when they ask him for bread, he should give them a stone. The pleasures he bestows are apples of Sodom—fair to the eye, but in the mouth full of dust and ashes. The honours and riches he confers are jewels of gold and silver and precious stones, very valuable and beautiful, it may be, but which have no relation whatever of nourishment to souls perishing for want of the bread of life.

Let us seek to be convinced of the folly and misery of our idolatry! Let our spiritual appetite, which has been perverted to indulge itself in earthly vanities, return to its appropriate nourishment. Why should we any longer humble ourselves to so many perishing things that are ashes, and call them bread? "Hearken diligently to me," says our Saviour, "and eat ye that which is good." He communicates the spiritual reality of which the feeding

of the body with food that perishes is a symbol. From a merciful indulgence to that tendency of our feelings to take their impressions from outward objects, which leads to idolatry, God has become man, assumed our nature, and addressed Himself personally to our affections by redemptive acts of loving-kindness. And thus incarnate in our nature—living, and dying, and rising again for us—Jesus is the provision of Zion, the true bread of the soul. He is not only the possessor of the resources of the universe, but He is Himself better than all His gifts. This is the food for which our souls were created, and in which alone they can find righteousness and strength. It is admirably adapted to all the weaknesses and wants, to all the sins and sorrows, of our being. Its all-sufficiency meets our insufficiency at every point, and it never loses its relish. It endureth unto everlasting life. Feeding upon this food, there will be no pain, no wretchedness, but a peace that passeth all understanding—a joy unspeakable and full of glory—a life growing fuller, and richer, and stronger, unto the stature of a perfect man in Christ. And thus living, and moving, and having our being in our Saviour, we shall enjoy the world—so far as it is fitted to minister enjoyment—in a way that no idolater of it can ever know. It is only when the earth becomes organized by a living agency that it can nourish the body. It is only in the tissues of the plant—in the ear of corn, in the form of bread—that the earth can feed us. And so it is only in and through Christ, *who only hath life*, that we can truly enjoy the world—that all things become ours, ministering to our faith and to our

growth in grace. If we go to the world first and foremost, if we seek our happiness in it directly, we must necessarily feed on ashes. We are like the man who seeks his food in the mineral contents of the earth—in its clays and sands—instead of in the corn that groweth out of the earth. But if we feed upon Christ, in the allfulness that dwelleth in Him bodily, we have stored up, and concentrated, and *organized* for us all that our souls need. The world, when sanctified and transformed by Him, will become a teacher of heavenly wisdom, instead of a deceiver—a rich and ever-varying banquet, instead of a heap of ashes; and all things will work together for our good.

CHAPTER VIII.

SPIRITUAL CATHARISM.

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart."—PSALM xxiv. 3, 4.

THIS new term, derived from a Greek word signifying purity, has been invented by Mr. Tomlinson to distinguish between ordinary and chemical cleanliness; for the two things are not by any means the same. We imagine that our bodies, when we have thoroughly washed them, are perfectly free from all impurity; but the chemist proves to us by convincing experiments, that though we wash ourselves with snow-water, and make our hands never so clean—yea, though we wash ourselves with nitre, and take us much soap—we are still unclean. We cannot be made chemically clean by any process which would not injure or destroy us. The slightest exposure to the air—the great receptacle of all impurities—covers our skin with a greasy organic film, which pollutes every substance with which we come into contact. It is well known that the process of crystallization in chemical solutions is set going by the presence of some impurity, in the shape of motes or dust-particles, which act as nuclei around which the salts gather into crystals. But if the solution

be protected from all floating impurities by a covering of cotton-wool, which filters the air, it may be kept for any length of time, at a low temperature, without crystallizing. A glass rod that is made chemically clean by being washed with strong acids or alkalies, such as sulphuric acid or caustic potash, can be put into the solution without exciting any change in it; but the smallest touch of what the most fastidious would call clean fingers, starts at once the process of crystallization: thus showing that the fingers are not truly clean.

Nature is exceedingly dainty in her operations. Unless the agents we employ are stainlessly pure, they will not produce the results which we naturally expect from them. Thus, for instance, if we scrape a few fragments from a fresh surface of camphor, and allow them to fall on water that is newly drawn from the cistern-tap, into a chemically clean vessel, they will revolve with great rapidity, and sweep over the surface. But if the vessel, before being filled, has been rubbed and polished with a so-called clean cloth, or if the water has stood awhile, or if a finger has been placed in it, the particles of camphor will lie perfectly motionless; thus proving that, however clean the cloth, or the vessel, or the finger may seem, an impurity has been imparted which prevents the camphor from exhibiting its strange movements. Or to adopt a more familiar experiment: if we pour a quantity of lemonade, or any other aërated fluid, into a glass which seems to be perfectly clean and bright, the lemonade will at once effervesce and form bubbles of gas on the sides of the glass. But if we first wash the glass with some strong acid

or alkali, and then rinse it thoroughly with fresh water newly drawn, we may pour the lemonade into it, and no bubbles will be seen. The reason of this difference is, that in the former case the glass which appears to us to be clean is in reality impure with the products of respiration or combustion, or the motes and dust of the air, which act as nuclei in liberating gas ; whereas in the latter case the glass is absolutely clean, and therefore no longer possesses the power of liberating the gas from the liquid. The cork or the spoon with which we excite renewed effervescence in an aërated liquid that has become still, produces this effect not by its motion, as we should suppose, but by its uncleanness. Were it possible to free it from all impurity, we might stir the liquid a whole day without raising a single sparkle.

From these examples we see the importance of a chemically clean surface in the performance of many experiments, and the influence of the slightest speck of dust in modifying their results. They reveal to us the universal presence of impurity in apparently the cleanest vessels from which we eat and drink—in the snowiest table-linen that we use—in our hands, however scrupulously washed—in short, in ourselves and in all our surroundings, however careful we may be. Our utmost purity is a mere relative or comparative thing. We may be cleaner than others ; but the highest standard of physical cleanliness we can reach comes far short of the absolute chemical standard. So is it likewise in the spiritual world. Our idea of purity and God's idea are two very different things. Comparing ourselves with

ourselves or with others, we have no sense of contrast. We may appear to have clean hands and pure hearts, but in the eyes of Him in whose sight the immaculate heavens are not clean, and who chargeth the sinless angels with folly, we are altogether vile and polluted. In the mirror of God's absolute holiness, the purest of earthly characters sees a dark and defiled reflection. The prophet Isaiah, whom God commissioned, on account of his sterling integrity, to be the bearer of his message to Israel, was constrained by the vision of God's glory in the temple to cry out, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." The much tried patriarch of Uz, of whom the Lord Himself testified to Satan, the accuser of the brethren, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil," was, nevertheless, constrained to say, as the effect of a clearer manifestation of God's infinite purity upon his mind: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Immeasurably greater than the difference between chemical cleanliness and ordinary cleanliness, is the difference between God's purity and man's purity. The physical fact is but the faint image of the moral; and chemistry, in showing to us the wonderful purity of nature's operations, gives a new meaning and a deeper emphasis to the declaration of Scripture, that nature's

God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He cannot look upon sin.

There is no such aversion as this in the elements of nature; there is no such repulsion in all physical law. No illustrations from material things can give an adequate conception of the attitude of the Infinite mind towards moral evil. To all men God's infinite purity is the tritest and most commonplace of truths, the most elementary and obvious of first principles; and yet the ideas which different men, or even the same men in different moral states, have of it, vary immensely. To one it may be but a mere abstract logical proposition, exciting no emotion in the soul, and producing no effect upon the life; a mere algebraic symbol, representing some unknown quantity; a mere scientific truth, like the chemist's talk of cleanliness. To another it is the most intense of all experiences, stirring up the deepest emotions and transforming the whole nature. The same man, as was seen in the case of Job and Isaiah, may have at one time a feeling of complacency regarding the holiness of God; while at another time the same logical truth, with the same logical significance, intensified by the strength and life of spiritual emotion, overpowers him with awe and dread. Chemical cleanliness is a scientific truth, which, when once comprehended, is the same for all minds at all times; but the moral truth of God's infinite purity has a widely different meaning for different souls, or for the same soul at different times. Or if there be a state in which this great moral truth becomes like a scientific fact or formula, the same for all minds at all times, it can only be at the

zero of spiritual life when the fool says in his heart, "There is no God, and there is none that doeth good, no not one."

Impurity in natural things is caused by waste, disintegration, or combustion. When objects have served their purpose in one form, they become effete, and therefore impure. Running water is living water, and therefore is sweet and pure; but whenever it becomes stagnant it loses its life, begins to putrefy, and becomes foul and unwholesome. A rock is called a live rock so long as it is hard and sound in the quarry, "glistens like the sea-waves, and rings under the hammer like a brazen bell:" but whenever it is cut out of the quarry and exposed to the air, it begins to lose the life that kept its particles together, and crumbles into dust. In its native bed the rock is pure, but when it is weathered by exposure it forms the mud of the highway, or the dust that pollutes everything by its presence. The clay and soil of our fields are caused by the oxidation or burning of pure metals; are, in fact, the ashes of metals. The dirt that cleaves to our footsteps, as the emblem of all impurity, is produced by the disintegration of the brightest metals or the most sparkling jewels. We say of a tree that it is living when it is growing and putting forth foliage and fruit, and in this state it is pure and beautiful; but whenever it ceases to grow it dies, and decay begins, and it harbours all sorts of abominable things, the products of corruption. Everywhere throughout nature, impurity is caused by objects ceasing to preserve the natural life that is in them; ceasing to serve the purpose for which they were created. And so

is it with man. Impurity in him is caused by the loss of spiritual life, by departing from the uprightness in which he was created, and seeking out inventions of his own. He has broken the order and law of his existence, and his whole nature has disintegrated in an atmosphere of sin. Passion has broken loose from the law of cohesion to God; the will no longer responds to the gravitation of conscience and reason; the whole being has become vitiated, disordered, and corrupt. And just as mud is the foul product of the purest crystal when it is broken down from the constitutive order and original law of its creation, so all impurity in man's thought and word and deed is the vile product—the rust as it were—of a nature made in the image of God, through its corruption—that is, as the word implies—the breaking up together of it by sin; through its losing of that life of unity, simplicity, and order which results from abiding in God. Man's nature has become a chaos, an irregular, confused mixture of motives, feelings, and ends. With his singleness of eye he lost his clearness of spiritual vision. With his simplicity of aim and unity of object he lost his purity and transparency of character. Separating from God, the Rock of his salvation, he suffered spiritual decay in all his parts, and sank into the fearful pit and the miry clay. Ceasing to abide and grow in the Tree of Life, he has been cast forth as a branch and s withered, the prey of vile lusts and morbid vanities.

This description applies to every human being. Man's pride may refuse the imputation, and he may think that his experience refutes it. But the continuous testimony

of the unerring Word of God, to which the witness of every true church has been added, is that "we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Every Christian whose eyes have been opened to see the extent of his own corruption, who has seen his own character in the light of God's law, and in contrast with God's nature, feels the truth of the human portraiture drawn by the Divine pencil: "Every one is gone back; they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one;" and though his nature is changed by grace, he can never forget his own assimilation to the corrupted mass of nature, or deny the application to him of the apostle's words: "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." There is indeed such a thing as natural goodness and virtue in the unregenerated heart. Benevolence, filial and parental affection, pity, gratitude, generosity of disposition, the love of justice, in themselves morally good, are still parts of the nature which God has communicated to mankind. Man's nature in its wildest aberration is not without traces of its divine original, or fragments of beauty and magnificence. All human beings are not alike. Many feel incapable of the vices which they see committed around them. Comparing the honourable and generous character of some men with the sordid viciousness of others, we cannot but feel that the world has its good and its bad men, its pure and impure. But such moral purity as we see in some individuals, causing them to thank God in their hearts that they are not as

other men, is like ordinary cleanliness as compared with chemical cleanliness. We think our hands, or a glass of water, or a table-cloth clean; they certainly seem to be pure and spotless; our senses can detect no defilement in them; and for the common purposes of life they may be sufficiently clean. But when we submit them to the test of chemical experiment, we find out the hidden impurities, and understand how widely different our notions of cleanliness are from the absolute truth. And so, we have a warmth of indignation against injustice and oppression, and we think this is a hatred of sin; we feel a thrill and a glow of generous admiration when we see a noble character or hear of a noble deed, and we mistake this for an innate love of holiness. But when the Spirit convinces us of sin, and makes upon us the great experiment of grace which opens the eyes and the heart together, we see the evil roots from which the seemingly fair fruits proceed; we know that these virtues flow from a principle of earthliness, self-interest, and expediency, and not from love of God or love of holiness. Our depravity is shown to us as convincingly by the goodness praised by all men, which disowns God and bears fruit for other objects than His glory, as by the vices which all men hate and repudiate. There may be much to love and admire in us; as natural men we may do right, act honestly, and feel properly, just as in mud formed by the disintegration of a micaceous rock, we see the mica scales still sparkling pure and bright in the sunlight amid the surrounding defilement. But as we call the mud impure, even though it contain these remains of former purity,

because it has broken away from its living cohesion and unity in the rock, and become mixed up with all sorts of substances; so we call a natural man corrupt and impure, although he may have many excellences of character and conduct, because he has departed from the life and unity of his being in God, and has become a law unto himself, falling into mixtures of causes in all his actions. His excellences do not form part of a living uniform principle of conduct, a high moral state of being like mica in the rock. They are capricious and uncertain—like mica in the mud, mixed up with such a confusion of motives and feelings that what induces him to act in one way to-day may induce him to act in another way to-morrow. Having no fixed rule of conduct or action, he is the slave of interest and expediency, and his virtues are determined by these. And therefore it is that the man who stands justified and approved before himself and the world, stands utterly condemned before God; and all natural men are included under sin, and there is no difference.

As chemical cleanliness is essential for the successful performance of certain physical experiments, so spiritual purity is an essential qualification for the enjoyment of certain spiritual privileges. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," said our Saviour in that great sermon on the mount, in which he delivered to those who were entering His kingdom the great principles of moral righteousness. That purity which comes not of ceremonial cleansings—scrupulous washings of cups and platters, hands and vestments, or the mere outward

observance of the precepts of the law—but from having a heart right with God, has a wonderful keenness of spiritual insight, an all-penetrating spiritual intuition. As the transparent atmosphere of a summer day brings the most distant objects near, and reveals the minutest details and outlines of the landscape, so the purity of a heart filled with the love of God brings out with the utmost distinctness and vividness the glories of the heavenly world—reveals those deep things of God, those mysteries of the divine life, which are wonderful to soul rather than to sense. It looks through the superficial and delusive appearance, and penetrates to the real inward significance of things. It knows the eternal meaning of facts, the Divine relations of persons, how they appear before God, and are related to His purpose and kingdom. It understands in some measure the secret of the Lord in His works of nature and providence—the meaning of those natural hieroglyphics which point us to heavenly realities—the purport of those providential dealings which disclose the Divine will—the design of every trial and blessing. While others are perplexed and in difficulty, the pure-hearted see a plain path before them, and a clear sky above them. God Himself is known by those who are in some measure pure as He is pure, in a way which others cannot conceive. As a lake mirrors the sky in its bosom, making of air and water one beauteous ideal scene, so the heart that is free from the defilement and disturbance of sense and passion, and turned in thought and affection towards God, realizes a junction of heaven and earth, of God and the soul. In every

pure and loving heart Divinity is united to humanity. God is not far off; He dwells in the heart, and the heart dwells in Him. The Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile, sees heaven always opened; and the mystic ladder which binds the seen and the unseen is ever set up in his heart. He has always freedom of access to the presence of God. "Who," says the Psalmist, "shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart." The prophet Isaiah echoes the same reply: "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil, he shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; his eyes shall see the King in His beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off."

Although there were no barrier save foulness of nature, this of itself would be sufficient to prevent all fellowship with God. The man whose hands are unclean, whose heart is impure, cannot in the nature of things ascend into the hill of God, or stand in His holy place. His own moral condition would prevent his entering, although the door were thrown wide open. His presence would be as great a source of disorder and disturbance among the pure elements of God's abode, as a speck of dust in a chemical solution. He would feel out of keeping with the place, and out of harmony with Him who is the light and the glory of it. He would have no enjoyment there, for the constitution of his nature is essentially a moral one, and therefore a pure heart is necessary to his happiness wherever he is. His character must be brought

into conformity with his conscience, for conscience is an essential part of his nature, and cannot be destroyed. So long as it exists, it must protest against sin, which is a disease of the moral nature—no matter how pure may be the circumstances by which he is surrounded, how glorious the place in which he may happen to be. Where this antagonism between conscience and character prevails, it is obvious that there can be no true happiness even in the very presence of God. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" anywhere.

Practically, impurity subjects a man to many losses and evils. Not more thoroughly do the clouds intercept the light and heat of the sun, and prevent the deposition of dew, than do the impure exhalations of the soul intercept the light and saving health of God's countenance, and hinder the reviving influences of the dew of grace. As in the process of crystallization every speck of dust becomes a nucleus, drawing to itself all the particles in the solution; so every sin becomes the centre-point of other sins—takes to itself seven spirits more wicked than itself, with which to pollute the whole nature. It is as impossible to keep an impure soul from adding sin to sin, as it is to keep a chemical solution exposed to the motes of the air without crystallizing. It attracts to itself all the hidden evil of its own being, and all the evil that lurks in its surrounding circumstances, and with these it builds up a dark, poisonous moral structure, appalling from its compact symmetry and concentrated power. Then, too, the strong hold which the love of the world, and the heat and fierceness of passion, have over

us; the grovelling of our imaginations among images of vanity, lust, and earthliness; the evil suggestions that arise spontaneously in our heart, even amid the purest scenes and in the most sacred employments; our little knowledge of Christ, His person, character, and work; our little experience of God, as a presence manifested in the soul; our little sensibility to sin and appreciation of the purity and saintliness of the Christian character; our little longing after heaven and heavenly-mindedness, not because of the world's weariness and disgusts which all men feel, but because of the heart's positive affinities for what is holy and spiritual;—all these losses and evils are caused by our impurity—by the sin that stains and darkens the soul, and destroys its spiritual life.

When the Psalmist says that the only man who can ascend God's hill, and dwell in His holy place, is he whose hands are clean and whose heart is pure, it is obvious that he is chanting the praises of the Messiah—shadowing forth the spotless purity of our ascending Lord. To none else does the description apply. He alone is the absolutely sinless One. Holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, He fulfilled the work which He came on earth to do, and with His Father's perfect approbation He ascended the everlasting hill, and now dwells in the holy place. In the absolute sense, no mere man has clean hands and a pure heart. Perfect, absolute purity cannot be realized in a world lying in wickedness like this, and by fallible creatures so full of corruption as we are. As we cannot be made chemically clean by any process which would not destroy

us, so we cannot be made perfectly holy until the walls of this tabernacle of flesh, in which the leprosy of sin is so inherent and inseparable, be taken down in the grave, and be rebuilt as an habitation of God through the Spirit. "Sin is in this world the imperishable token of humanity." It is not something which has penetrated into our nature from without, and may therefore be expelled by a force within. It is rooted in the invisible, inscrutable depths of our spiritual nature, and mingles its poison with the very source of our being, with the very first beginnings of our spiritual and natural life. We were born in sin, and conceived in iniquity; and therefore we cannot altogether cast off this evil power, or root it out, or reach its origin, by any expulsive power or curative process that can be furnished on earth. The purest saint that has ever lived cannot appear before Infinite Purity, without carrying into His presence much of that moral defilement which he hates, but which still cleaves to him. If, therefore, absolute purity of hands and heart be the only qualification, none can follow Christ where He has gone; not one of the human race can ascend God's hill, or dwell in His holy place. That shrine must be an unapproachable solitude—none can be within save the great High Priest Himself, girded with His spotless linen ephod, and clothed with His garments of glory and beauty.

But though the highest condition of purity be thus unattainable on earth, the process of purification can be commenced here; some degrees of it can be attained. By every man a higher and yet higher stage can be

reached ; there need be no limit to the process while life remains. And access to God's presence by the new and living way is open to purity that is very far indeed from being perfect—that feels itself to be compassed about with many infirmities, and is constrained to cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this bondage of sin and death?" If we are seeking earnestly spiritual cleansing, even though we have not obtained it —if we are struggling so honestly and perseveringly against impurity that we can say, "It is no longer I, but sin that dwelleth in me," in the midst of humiliation and defeat, then no fetters of sin can keep us from God's holy place, or take away from us His love. We shall have a measure of insight and privilege proportioned to the degree of our purity. The clearer our character, the clearer our vision of God ; the purer our heart and hands, the fuller and happier the enjoyment of communion and fellowship with Him. And before this growing purity is held out the hope of dwelling for ever in that holy place where nothing that defileth can enter, —a hope which of itself tends to purify the heart, and raise its desires and affections above the world. For this perfect purity of being and condition, the discipline of life is a preparation, the religion of Christ is a sanctifying power, so that he who yields to the will of God, which is our sanctification, and experiences the renewing power of the Spirit, has not only absolute purity as his aim and end, but has the assurance, in the midst of many failures, that he will yet be presented faultless before the presence of God's glory with exceeding joy. "These

are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Yes; blessed be God, the lost purity of man can be restored! The soul that has sinned and polluted itself almost hopelessly, can be recovered and made purer and holier even than Adam was before he fell—so pure that he will be utterly inaccessible to all evil—as high above the reach of temptation, the slightest suggestion of sin, as God Himself. We are surprised to be told in the chemical manufactory, that the splendid mass of pure and gorgeously-tinted crystals, which excites our admiration, has been started into existence by *the dirty hands of the workmen.* But the Gospel tells us of a far greater marvel; and we have seen it in our every-day life. From the darkest human sin, by reason of the contrition and humility and faith to which it has given birth and which gather around it, may spring up the loveliest and most transparent Christian life. God can raise up from the lowest depths of depravity to which successful temptation can reduce a human being, a purity that is higher and grander even than the purity that has never fallen—that is pure as Christ is pure. The mud that men trampled under foot can be recovered from its mixture of foulness; and its particles, losing their attraction for foreign substances, and rejecting them all, may gather together and form a crystal purer than that from whose destruction the mud originated. And so the vilest human character can be lifted out of the mire of sin, and so purged of its acquired pollution—so recovered from its noxious mixture

of fear, doubt, selfishness, and temptation, by being made single-eyed and single-hearted—as that it will reflect much of the glory of God from its transparent simplicity.

But what is this potent alchemy, more wonderful than the fabled transmutation of lead into gold, more astonishing than the brilliant dyes and crystals which modern chemistry brings out of the vilest refuse? Who or what can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? It is not man's work or training, but the gift and the inspiration of God. By no process of discipline or education, by nothing that can act upon our outer conduct, or that can reach us only through our senses, can impurity be transformed into purity. As the power of sin is inward, rooting itself in the very substance of the soul, so the power of sanctification that is to extirpate it must also be inward, and mingle with the secret fountains from which our being issues. As sin is not a succession of separate evil acts, but an evil principle of action, so holiness is a state of being, and not the adopting of certain maxims or the performance of certain deeds. Purity cannot be attained by the works of the law, by a system of rules and discipline, although these influences which act upon us from without are excellent in their own place and order, and necessary for the development of it. It must be communicated by the same Power that first made the soul itself, contending with sin in the very citadel of its dominion. Our purification must come directly from God Himself, and must begin with that which He puts into us, with "that movement of the heart and conscience which we call faith," and which is His gift. The

righteousness of Christ is the only nucleus around which the human soul will arise out of its corruption and foul mixture of motives and desires, and crystallize into a pure and transparent character. His blood alone can wash away our guilt, and make our sins which are as scarlet white as snow. Christ dwelling in us by faith is the living new-creating power that is the centre point of all our purity. Not only does He purify us by investiture, clothe us with His own spotless character when we are justified by faith in Him and accepted of God for His sake, and keep us in the mould, as it were, of this super-induced character, but His Spirit works out purity in us as the life and law of our soul. He brings every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; He brings the broken, mixed, disordered chaos of our passions and principles back to the regularity and simplicity that is in Christ Jesus. He makes one principle to dominate us—the love of God; one end to determine our efforts—the glory of God. And, in proportion as Christ is thus living in us, and we in Him, so in proportion are the impurities of our nature clarified, and the old affinities of sin extirpated. We become—by the righteousness of Christ upon us for justification, and by the righteousness of Christ wrought out in us by the sanctifying power of the Spirit—gradually more and more like our Lord, pure as He is pure, and perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.

Chemical cleanliness, I have said, is produced by washing vessels and substances that are employed in experiments in strong sulphuric acid, or with a strong solution

of caustic potash, and then rinsing with water. Analogous to these powerful appliances are the means which God often employs to produce moral purity, those chastenings of the flesh and crucifixions of the spirit which are not joyous but grievous. He sends sickness, that wears out the body; trouble, that racks the mind; and sorrow, that takes all the relish out of life. He mortifies self-seeking by disappointment, and humbles pride by failure. He makes lust its own scourge, and the idolatry of the heart its own punishment. By all these searching and terribly energetic purifiers, that corrode the soul as sulphuric acid does the body, He helps forward outwardly the Spirit's work of renewing in the heart. His will is our sanctification; this is the great end to which all the physical universe is subordinated, and even sacrificed, if necessary, for which every movement and object on earth are working together; this is the grand design and crowning glory of the work of redemption, to accomplish which He spared not His own Son, but gave Him up to death for us all. And, if He spared not His own Son, most assuredly He will not spare us, if scourging and chastisement be needed for the purification of our souls. Although judgment is His strange work, and He has no pleasure in afflicting the sons of men, yet will He afflict us, and that more severely, the more He desires that we should yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. He applies trials and temptations as tests to our principles and dispositions, as experiments to discover and display the reality and the degree of the evil that is in us. He has provided that the ordinary discipline of the soul

should be the discipline of temptation, which makes it inevitable that we should sometimes fall. He wishes us, through sore grappling with the evils of life, and being sometimes worsted by them, to feel our own weakness and the strength that He brings; He wishes us, through darkness, sorrow, and death, to have within us the richness of our own experience; our principles to be not mere sentiments, but living powers whose strength we have proved in many a sad night of wrestling with sorrow, legacies of blessing that the vanquished angel has left behind to us. Ah, it needs the heat of severe and oft-repeated and long-protracted trial, working together with God's Spirit, to evaporate the incongruous elements of sin and sense that make us impure, and build up with the broken diverse fragments of our character, that stubbornly refuse to unite in harmony under any self-derived power of man, the pure transparent crystal of Christian simplicity;—oneness of knowledge—"*One thing I know*, that, whereas I was blind, now I see;" oneness of desire —"*One thing have I desired* of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple;" oneness of action—"This *one thing I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

And these trials of purity come to us on the great crowded highway of life, and amid the common exposures of the world's daily work. This is not the doctrine

of many who imagine, with the monks and hermits of old, that spiritual purity, saintliness of soul and life, is a star that dwells apart, associated only with seclusion and meditation, with the solitude and celibacy of the cell, and the stillness and inanition of the sick-room. We hear constant complaints of the many and grievous obstacles placed in the way of spiritual purity by the vile works and ways of men. Such individuals would reverse the Saviour's prayer for His disciples, and wish, in order to be kept from the evil, to be taken out of the world. And yet it is by the discipline of these very obstacles that the lost chastity of the soul is to be restored. Nothing can so cleanse and brace us up in uncorrupted vigour as doing our duty, the work that lies to our hand, even in the midst of the foul sights and sounds, the dark temptations and sorrows of our ordinary sphere. The nature that is allowed to settle on its lees in the midst of solitude, with nothing to think of but how to attain purity, retains a sediment of carnality which the least temptation will stir up, converting in a moment the whole pellucid fountain into a polluted pool; retains, even in the absence of all temptations, the scent and taste of its own lusts and passions, which rage with greater violence because there is nothing else to occupy the soul. We ought to be thankful therefore that we have work to do in the midst of human haunts, for thus alone can we escape from the infection of our own evil humours, and follow after "that holiness which is not separation from work or innocent recreation, or any of those scenes and circumstances which are lawful, but from whatever is unworthy of God's presence,

from the evil thoughts and actions which offend Him, and which conscience feels to be profane."

Nor are we to confound the beautiful world of God with that kingdom of Satan set up in man's heart and in society—which the New Testament calls the world—and to which it forbids us to be conformed. Many do this to their own great moral hurt. With an austere piety they regard the physical beauties that abound on every side of them as trials, and spurn them beneath their feet in their constant looking away to heaven, and their longing to get to a better world. But what does this world itself require, but that they and their fellow-creatures should be better than they are. In this earth of ours it is only man that is vile. Nature hates all forms of impurity; she speedily hides them from view, or works them up into pure substances. The pollutions which man causes by his works, the decays and corruptions of her own objects, she transforms by her wonderful alchemy into perfect and beautiful things. She hastens to crystallize her rough rocks into diamonds and rubies; to evaporate into golden clouds her polluted waters; to adorn with the glories of light the dark shapes of the thunderstorm; to cover all the deformities of her own surface with a living robe of rainbow loveliness. How transparent are her waters; how exquisite her verdure; how clear and bright her skies! The footsteps of God on this earth are holy footsteps; from the print of each of them springs up the snow-white flower or the radiant jewel. Every bush is burning with God; and every spot of earth is holy ground. Notwithstanding the miserable

disorder and ruin which man's presence and sin have brought upon nature, we cannot but discern in it still traces of celestial purity, recollections and memories of Edenic holiness. The forest can lift up its pure leafy hands; the flower-cup can swing its stainless censer; the stream can murmur with the blue of heaven in its depths; and the mountain, the religion of the landscape, can raise its snowy peak to the near vicinity of the great white throne itself;—and all can join in their own sympathy of innocence and purity in the creation-song of the four living creatures—"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Did we feel the holiness of that nature which is God's footstool, on which the blessed feet of Jesus walked, on which His precious blood was poured forth in consecration, we should ever be putting off our shoes in reverence and awe. We should feel that it is we who are unworthy of nature, and not nature that is unworthy of us that "this fair creation is more like heaven than we are like angels." Instead of despising the world, therefore, in our haste to ascend to a better, let us endeavour to make ourselves more fitting inhabitants of it. The purer we ourselves become, the purer will all things become to us,—the more beautiful we shall feel the earth to be. Nature is full of our own human heart, is a reflection of our own nature; and the beauty we admire in it is the sympathetic expression of the beauty of our spirit. We act upon it, and it reacts upon us. Thus the man of clean hands and pure heart, whose blameless outer life tells unmistakeably what he is under all the

influences of the eyes of others, and who keeps sacred to God that inner shrine of the soul hidden from the most loving and intimate friend, feels that the tabernacle of God is already with men, and that he is a dweller in it. He sees around him the paradise which others lament they have lost, and for which they can only seek in another world by being disgusted with this; he exorcises all the evil of earthly things by the name of Christ, whom he serves; and, not defiling his garments, keeping them unspotted from the flesh, he realizes even now and here the fulfilment of the promise, "They shall walk with me *in white*, for they are worthy."

CHAPTER IX.

THE ACTION OF PRESENCE.

"For none of us liveth to himself."—ROMANS xiv. 7.

ONE of the most remarkable phenomena in chemistry is that which is known as "catalysis," or the "action of presence." It is called by the latter name because the mere presence of a certain substance among the atoms of another substance produces the most extensive changes upon these atoms; and yet the body thus operating is itself unchanged. Thus, for instance, starch is converted into sugar and gum, at a certain temperature, by the presence of an acid which does not participate in the change. It has long been known that a current of hydrogen gas directed upon a piece of polished platinum will take fire—that is, unite with the oxygen of the atmosphere through the influence of the metal; and yet the platinum will remain completely unaltered. So also gold and silver possess the power of decomposing the binoxide of hydrogen, without any effect being produced upon themselves. Modern discovery has

greatly extended the list of substances which possess this extraordinary property of resolving compounds into new forms, or chemically combining heterogeneous atoms, by their mere presence—no action being detected on themselves. The power of catalysis is found to be very common both in the organic and the inorganic world. We see familiar examples of it in fermentation; in the change produced upon meal by the introduction of leaven or yeast; in the process of germination, by which the starch of the seed is converted into sugar and gum, and thus rendered soluble, so that it may rise up as sap in the young shoot; in the secretion of the blood; and in the morbid effects produced in the human system by infection from gases, miasma, or putrid matter. In short, very many of the most important actions of growth and decay, of life and death throughout the animal and vegetable kingdoms, are produced by this catalytic power.

But it is not in the chemical world alone that we find illustrations of the "action of presence." The attraction of cohesion, which unites the particles of every substance together; and the attraction of gravitation, which draws the lighter and smaller body to the larger and heavier, and by which rolling worlds are kept in their appointed orbits, are caused by something that may be considered akin to this law. To what else can we attribute the analogous fact that the external appearance of many animals bears a definite relation to the appearance of the soil on which they live, or the objects by which they are surrounded; the tree-frog being green like the woods, the grouse brown like the moors, the skate tawny like

the sandy bottom of the sea, and the Arctic bear white like its snow-clad haunts? It is not inconsistent with the simplicity of nature to suppose, that some mysterious modification of the same law of chemical affinity and of attraction, may produce the great empirical or regional resemblance subsisting between all the plants and animals belonging to one continent and its dependencies—a resemblance so marked in general effect, and often in individual detail, that were an experienced naturalist to be shown a new plant or animal, without its locality being indicated, he would be able, from its typical peculiarities, to tell the country from which it had come. Ascending higher, we find the influence of this principle in the characteristic features of mental, moral, and physical likeness which the inhabitants of a particular district acquire; and in the resemblance so often noticed between the countenances of husband and wife who have lived long together.

But it is in the social world that we see the most striking examples of the "action of presence." Human beings are unceasingly exerting unconscious influence upon one another. Insensibly to themselves, they are moulding each other's character, conduct, and destiny. Without any thought, or intention, or even consciousness of the fact, one man is stimulating or depressing another, and producing results of the most vital and lasting importance. How different are the effects produced by intercourse with different individuals! The very presence of some is like sunshine, brightening and cheering all who come within their influence, stimulating mental

and spiritual growth, while the society of others acts like a dark cloud, intercepting light and warmth, chilling the feelings, and arresting the development of mind and heart. We feel at once at our ease in the presence of some people; we speak freely and naturally, we are elevated by the unconscious influence that emanates from them. On the other hand, we are ill at ease, awkward and reserved in the expression of our thoughts and feelings, depressed and unhappy, in the presence of others. On a large scale we see the effects of the same law of unconscious influence in the conventionalities of life: in the arbitrary fashions which regulate dress, mode of living, and all outward appointments; in the enthusiasm of a crowd; in the panics or social stampedes which, with a strange periodicity, convulse trade; in the moral epidemics of the Middle Ages, which agitated a whole generation, and seem fables to us; and in the various forms of what may be called contagious frenzies in later times. The instinct of imitation, based upon this unconscious influence, is one of the most powerful in human nature—moulding the form of society, and determining the kind and degree of civilization. Few indeed possess sufficient strength of mind, or originality of character, to resist the subtle and all-pervading influence which makes a whole community conform to one common standard of thought or action.

The hem of Christ's garment was instinct with healing power; and we read that the very *shadow* of the apostles passing by shed silent virtue on the sick laid by the wayside. And so in a manner is it with Christians still.

The hem of their garment of righteousness—the pure linen, white and clean, of their example—imparts heavenly healing to all who touch it—often when the wearers are themselves unconscious that virtue has gone out of them. The shadow, as it were, of their bright virtues, of their godly lives, falls upon those with whom they associate, with inspiriting and sanctifying power. Such individuals are called the light of the world; and as naturally as the sun shines on the face of nature, so naturally do their lives shine upon society. Not by an exercise of will, but by spontaneous effulgence, do they illuminate, warm, and quicken the circle of their acquaintances. But this nameless influence, which goes out from their least conscious hours, is different in different cases. Though Christ's disciples have a general family likeness, they differ widely in the minor features of their character, temperament, experience, and conduct. The natural man often shines through the new man, and produces an alien impression. One is morose, gloomy, and bigoted; his very presence acts like an acid, souring the milk of human kindness and innocence. Another is severe with a Pharisaic strictness that interferes with the liberty of the Gospel, and makes sad the heart that God has not made sad—"putting the mere dead rule above the principle, and teaching that ceremonial observances are of more importance than the true human impulses." A third is morbid, shut up in himself, oppressed with little fidgety difficulties and trials, imagining that God desires sacrifice, not mercy. All these Christians are, insensibly to themselves, producing an effect upon others

quite contrary to what they wish: they are giving a wrong idea of their religion to the world; they are not only hardening their own human feelings, but also those of others, and creating a distaste, and even aversion, for what is called evangelical goodness, which all the teaching of their lips cannot counteract. On the other hand, there are Christians whose faces are always lighted up with a uniform calm and cheerfulness—whose feelings are as warmly human as they are truly heavenly; and these Christians produce in others a sense of their close relation to God, and breathe around them an atmosphere as healthy and exhilarating as the air on a mountain-top. To the world outside, they give a fair and adequate representation of what Christianity is and does. By their living in full-orbed harmony the human as well as the divine ideals of the Gospel, they bring them nearer to the sympathies of those who have not yet yielded to their influence. To their fellow-Christians they are exceedingly helpful in the warfare in which they are mutually engaged; for, singing at their Master's work, they encourage by their joyousness those who are tempted to flinch from duty, and contribute to make their work easier for all around them.

There are three things connected with this spiritual catalysis, or "action of presence," which demand our attention: first, its *truthfulness;* second, its *constancy;* and third, its *responsibility*.

1. This unconscious influence is eminently truthful. We say of children that they instinctively know those who love them, and go to such at once; while no kind

words or sweet looks will allure them to the side of those who are not at heart and always lovers of the little ones. What is this so-called instinct of children, but just the impression which a true character is making upon a guileless heart, made more susceptible, and gifted, by virtue of its simplicity, with an insight unknown to the wise and prudent? So also every one has noticed the fondness of animals for certain persons, and their aversion to others. A dog will allow one person to fondle and play with it in circumstances in which it will not permit another to approach it; and even an occasional harsh word from one who truly loves it, will avail more with it than all the tempting bribes of one who is indifferent. And the reason of this is, that the plastic nature of the dumb creature is affected by the real character of the individual. For it man has but one language which it can understand—the language of a kind and loving nature. True heartfelt interest is recognized even under the mask of temporary harshness, for love is justified of love; whereas callousness or hatred is detected under any disguise of apparent warmth and interest assumed for the occasion. In a similar way grown-up men and women are affected, though not perhaps so strongly and immediately, by the true character of those with whom they associate.

Every Christian is producing two sets of influences Two currents of power issue from him, which set in motion the wheels of life around him. One is the unconscious, involuntary influence of his real character; the other is the voluntary influence of what he con

sciously says and does—what he says and does for a special purpose. Now these two currents that flow from him may be opposed to one another. The one that seeks to set in motion the wheels of life may be neutralized by the one that comes in the opposite direction, and tends to make them stand still. The character may be saying one thing, and the lips and conduct another. A man preaches love to Christ and to men; but if his own heart and life are not saturated with this love—if it is not an experience in his own heart—he will preach in vain: for the language of his nature will be opposed to the language of his lips; the influence of his character will contradict the influence of his words. The power of character arises from its truthfulness. It cannot be concealed or neutralized by any profession or affectation, however plausible. In vain does a man profess to be what he is not. His true character shines out through the disguise in spite of him. The mask worn for a purpose continually falls off or slips aside, and reveals the natural face behind. It is impossible, by any amount of ingenuity or contrivance, to keep up a false appearance. The tone, the look, the attitude, are continually betraying a man; and in the sensibilities of men he is at once unmasked—in the *feeling* of his fellow-creatures he is known exactly for what he is.

There is a species of animalcule called Rotifera, living in tufts of mosses, which, when placed under the microscope, is found to be transparent as crystal. You see all its internal organs, and the processes of life going on in the inside of its body, as you see the works of a watch through its covering of glass. We are like this creature,

for we inhabit tabernacles which are equally transparent; and our motives, our feelings, our whole mental and moral economy, are showing themselves externally by signs which have no ambiguous meaning. I may not be able to tell why I think a certain person is not a genuine character, but I have an instinctive feeling that he is not what he pretends to be. So says every one of a false friend: and we may depend upon it that our character is truthful, and is producing its own proper impression, whatever our words or deeds may be; that it is what we naturally are, and not what we pretend to be, that is influencing others. In this way a man gets his deserts as a rule. According to this principle, no one ever did good or evil without hearing of it again—without finding that there have been plentiful witnesses conversant of it, however secret. The eye of God is on us always, and the eye of man much oftener than the shrewdest of us imagine.

2. But I pass on to consider the *constancy* with which this unconscious influence is exerted. Not more constantly is the sun pouring forth its beams, or a flower exhaling its fragrance, than the Christian is radiating or exhaling influence from his character upon those around him. Wherever he is, whatever he does, this influence never ceases. It underlies all his actions; it runs side by side with his words; it goes on when action ceases and words fail. What a man voluntarily chooses, says, or does, is only occasional. He does not always think or always act. From pure fatigue he must, perforce, be silent and inactive at times. But what he *is*—that is

necessarily perpetual, and co-extensive with his being. I cannot always speak a word for Christ, but I can always *live* for him; I cannot always *do* good actively—I may not have the opportunity, though I have the inclination—but I can always *be* good passively. The voluntary language of what I say or do is spasmodic, and liable to continual interruption; but the language of my character, of what I really am, is as continuous as my life itself, and suffers no more interruption than the beating of my heart or the breathing of my lungs. I can choose to do good or evil, to say a kind or bitter word; but I cannot choose to exert or repress the influence of my character, for it acts in spite of me—it produces its own proper impression whether I think of it or not. I cannot live at all without radiating this influence. "Simply *to be* in this world is to exert an influence compared with which mere words and acts are feeble." Just as the leaven, by its mere presence, changes the particles of meal in the midst of which it is hid, so does each human being, by his mere presence, affect for good or evil those with whom he associates.

3. For this unconscious influence that we thus constantly exert upon one another, we imagine that we are not responsible. A man, we are apt to say, cannot help the secret virtue that goes out of him to heal another, or the depressing or evil effect of his presence, look, or conversation, when he is not acting for a purpose, or setting himself up as an example. We are responsible for our voluntary words and actions, for the influence that we *desire* to produce upon others; but for the

unconscious, involuntary effect of our character and life, we think we are no more responsible than we are for the involuntary beating of our hearts, or the involuntary action of our lungs—no more responsible than the moon is for producing the tides of Earth, or Neptune for creating the perturbations of Uranus. A moment's serious reflection, however, will convince us that we cannot thus repudiate our responsibility in the matter. For what is our character? Is it not the sum and result of our thoughts, feelings, and actions? What is our life? Is it not a structure built up of all that we have said and done and experienced? This character we ourselves have formed; this life we ourselves have built up, by the action and reaction of our deeds. The character, when finished, passes beyond our control, and exerts its own influence independent of our active wishes and efforts. But we ourselves had the forming of it, by a series of thoughts, words, and deeds, over which at the time we had complete control;—just as the drunkard, by a series of acts of indulgence, which at first he can regulate or resist altogether, forms at last a habit which makes him completely its slave. We cannot help the silent influence which our character, when formed, produces; but we are responsible for the formation of it. It lies with every man to determine, under God, what his character shall be. True, there are hereditary tendencies, different constitutions, temperaments, and circumstances, that exert a modifying influence which no self-discipline can entirely counteract. But, making all due allowance for the disturbing effects

of these natural or inherited conditions, it is a truth which cannot be gainsaid, that there is very much in our character that we ourselves have produced. Our very accountability to God rests upon our ability to build up a good character; and if we are judged according to the goodness and evil of our character itself, we may certainly be held responsible for the good or evil influence which, unknown to us, it produces upon others. For that influence is the inevitable consequence of our character, just as the happiness or misery of our fellow-creatures is the true consequence of our good or bad deeds. If we are responsible for the natural consequences of our actions, we are in the same way responsible for the natural effects of our character.

We cannot live in the world and escape this responsibility, because we cannot live in the world and not exert a moral influence upon others. The radiation of heat from one object to another, the equalization of temperature, is not more certain in the physical world than the distribution of influence in the moral. It is impossible to trace out the full extent and ultimate consequences of this spiritual "action of presence." We are so bound up together in society—the human race constitutes such a compact and sensitive brotherhood—that the power which men insensibly exert over one another must spread and widen, like the ripples from a stone thrown into a pool, until all feel it. The ownership of sins is a very solemn question, which in this view of the matter comes home to every human bosom. "I ask the mountain," says the author of "Thorndale," "Why art thou suddenly

so dark? and the mountain answers, Ask the passing cloud that overshadows me. I ask the ocean, Why art thou so changeable? and the sea answers, Ask the sky above, that showers down now sunshine and now gloom, sends now calm and now stormy winds. I ask again, Why, O sky, dost thou wrap thyself in gloomy clouds? and the sky answers, Ask the valleys of the earth; they send these vapours up to me—they are not mine." Every particle of dust comes from a mine long wrought: storms, earthquakes, many geological revolutions, have been concerned in its origin. And thus is it in human life. No man stands isolated and circumscribed within himself—full-orbed and self-contained. None of us liveth to himself. The career of every single soul is wrought out, and its moral elements are mingled by its immersion in the social atmosphere, and its giving and taking with other persons. And thus, in judging every single soul, it is the whole world we judge; for every individuality is but the power of the whole manifesting itself in this particular form. I go to a criminal court. I see a criminal standing up at the bar pale and anguish-stricken; I hear the judge pronouncing sentence upon him. I know that he is guilty; he himself acknowledges his crime, and the judge, the jury, and the spectators are convinced of it. He is justly taxed with his special guilt; he is reasonably treated as the sole originator of what he has done. But still I cannot help seeing the sins of other men mingling with that great sin which has brought him to his doom. I speak not of the active influences that were employed to seduce him from the

path of virtue ; for those who were guilty of this fearful seduction knew it themselves, and on their head lies an execration which they feel that they deserve. But I speak of the unconscious influences which moulded his character and paved the way for his downfall—influences which proceeded from men without their wishing or even knowing it. At the very dawn of life, when his parents and friends were unconscious of exerting any influence upon him either for good or evil, he drew, by virtue of the mimic powers so strong in children, secretly and silently from them impressions of evil which no after discipline could remove. Father and mother, by sheer neglect, by their own ungodly life and irreligious character, formed in him an irreligious tendency—careless habits, which grew with his growth and strengthened with his strength. Afterwards wicked companions tainted his mind and heart, till the pollution on them grew thick and rank as slime on muddy pools, even when it was not in their thoughts to do him an injury. Further on, others helped him in his downward career by the looseness of their own lives. Their oaths, their sensual habits, their falsehood, dishonesty, and cunning, all took hold of his nature, and moulded it after the same pattern. And now I behold in the crime of this man, and in the dark character from which it sprang, the miserable result of a thousand sins of omission as well as commission, of character as well as of conduct, on the part of others ; and the warning of Scripture comes home to me with terrible emphasis—"Neither be partakers of other men's sins." Never till the day of judgment shall we be

fully aware of our responsibility in each other's life and action—shall we know how thickly interwoven is the web of human influence. And oh, how this partaking in other men's sins, not merely by what we do voluntarily for a purpose, but by the secret, unconscious influence of our character and actions, will complicate the decisions of that day! How the very victims of our thoughtless indulgence will come to wield the scourges of our retribution!

There are many whose only object in existence seems to be to do no harm, who hide their talent in a napkin lest it should come to evil, and to whose charge no man can lay anything. Objects of the world's indulgence on account of their inoffensiveness, it may nevertheless be true that they are plague-spots of humanity, centres of moral death, breathing deadly infection upon all who come within their sphere. All the time meaning well, their character, their example, may be the cause of fatal injury to many. A look, a word, a deed, insensibly to themselves, may "turn the scale of some one's immortality." Chemists tell us of substances whose inertia is disturbed by the slightest motion, so that they rush into permanent combinations. The touch of a feather will cause the iodide of nitrogen to explode, and the vibration of any kind of sound will decompose it. The scratch of a pin will so alter the arrangement of the molecules of iodide of mercury that their action on light is altered, and the colour of the whole mass is changed at once from yellow to bright red. Many other substances could be named whose equilibrium is so unstable, whose affi-

nity is so weak, that the most insignificant and apparently inadequate causes will immediately change their properties, so that they become henceforth quite different from what they were before. It is because the equilibrium of the substance on which he operates is so unsteady that the photographer produces his permanent pictures by sunlight; and the greater the instability or sensitiveness of the collodion, the shorter the time required to make the impression, and the deeper and more lasting it will be. Among the high Alps, early in the year, the traveller is told in certain places to proceed as quietly as possible. On the steep slopes overhead, the snow hangs so evenly balanced that the sound of the voice, the crack of a whip, the report of a gun, or the detachment of a snowball, may destroy the equilibrium, and bring down an immense avalanche that will overwhelm everything within reach in ruin. Applying these illustrations of the physical world to the condition of society around us, are there not many whose moral character is so unstable, whose principles are so unfixed, who are so evenly balanced between good and evil, that a word, a look, may incline them to the one side or to the other, and produce effects that will alter the colour and the nature of their whole future existence? Are there not souls around us hanging so nicely poised on the giddy slopes of temptation, watching us, and ready, on the least encouragement to evil from us—of which we ourselves are not conscious—to come down in terrible avalanches of moral ruin, crushing themselves and others in their fall? Are there not earnest ones whose holier purposes may

have been quenched for ever by our levity and impropriety of conduct, at the critical time when the Spirit was striving with them, and leading them from darkness to light and from Satan to God?

And for this unconscious evil that we produce, as well as for the active evil that we speak and do, we shall be held responsible by Him who has said, "Woe unto the world because of offences! It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" So common are such offences that, as Dr. Temple has said, our Lord treats their occurrence as the order of nature, the rule of society, a matter of necessity. The offences are so sure to come that we must count upon them. They are appointed to be the fire by which our faith is to be tried, the test by which our truth and love are to be valued; and often, by God's grace and blessing, the result is unexpectedly good—a recoil from sin, a revulsion to holiness. But, notwithstanding this, there is no excuse for the man by whom the offence cometh. Woe to that man who makes difficult the path of duty to a brother by his own misconduct; who tempts him aside, or puts a stumbling-block in his way by his inconsistency! Whatever the consequences may be, it were better for that man if a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. I know nothing more painful to the Christian who has repented and become a new creature in Christ—nothing that saddens more even the enjoyment of God's forgiveness—than the thought of the evil effects upon

others of his example in his unconverted state; friends misled by his friendship—trusting souls ruined by his love, following a steady course of sin in which he helped them to set out, and perpetuating that sin in widening circles in this world, on to another world, while he is utterly powerless to check it. Surely the thought that each man is in this sense his brother's keeper—that God has reposed in each of us this terrible trust—that we are responsible not only for what we choose and mean to do, but also for what the character we have formed does in spite of us and unknown to us—should induce us to be more careful in our walk and conversation. "If thou knewest," says Richter, in his "Doctrine of Education," "that every black thought of thine, or every glorious independent one, separated itself from thy soul, and took root outside of thee, and for ages on ages pushed and bore its poisonous or healing roots and fruits—oh, how piously wouldst thou choose and think!"

I cannot conclude this chapter without mentioning very briefly another kind of spiritual "catalysis," or "action of presence." I have shown that a man may do good or evil to others by the power of his character *unconsciously*, without being himself affected. It might also be shown that a man may do good to others by *wishing and exerting himself* to do good, while he himself is ignorant of and unaffected by the goodness. This last is the kind of catalytic action referred to by St. Paul when he says, "Lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." The Apostle in these words implies that it is possible

to do good to others, without being good oneself—that it is possible to be the means of converting others, while oneself is unconverted and unsaved. A lens of ice may be employed to collect the rays of the sun into a focus, and thus kindle a fire, while itself remains cold and unmelted. And so there are many whose own hearts are cold and hard as ice, who yet possess the strange power under God of kindling the fire of zeal and love in the hearts of others.

I have said that the influence of a man's character is the true influence which he exerts—that it shines through every mask, assumption, and profession—that it contradicts often the power of the words and actions said and done for a purpose. This is a great truth that cannot be denied. But still there are cases where a man's real character is not understood or found out; and in such cases his words and actions produce the effect for which he spoke and performed them. We have not always an opportunity of coming so closely into contact with people —of so watching and knowing them—that we can judge how far their true character and profession are in harmony. The preacher, for instance, who is seen only in the pulpit, is surrounded with an atmosphere of mystery haloed with the solemnity of his sacred work, and is a voice crying in the wilderness; and, known in this way only, his preaching is a power which is not neutralized by his private character. Besides, there are many guileless, simple-hearted, unsuspecting souls, who have faith in human goodness, and take for granted that a man is what he professes to be. In all such cases a man

may do good while he is not good. Alas! this is not a matter of supposition, but of certainty. Hundreds of instances could be given in which men have been the means of quickening, comforting, and building up souls in the Lord—while all the time they themselves were strangers to the power of truth, and ignorant of the love of Christ in their hearts. Ministers have preached the Gospel for years, have had revivals in their congregations, have been wise in winning souls—and yet have themselves been castaways in the end. Members of churches have been zealous in every good work, and active in every Christian duty—and yet have known nothing of godliness but the form. The very commonness of this thing increases its sadness. It is so very frequent that almost every exceptional case of sincerity is deemed worthy of a biography. That there are so many religious memoirs of persons remarkable for nothing save their piety and earnestness, is a proof how little we expect every professor of Christianity to be a true Christian, and how greatly we are astonished when the profession and the practice are in harmony. We think the case of Moses leading the Israelites to the Promised Land, while he himself was forbidden to enter, peculiarly pathetic; but its pathos is in reality far less touching than the case of the man who brings others to the fountain of life, while he himself is perishing of thirst—who is like a guide-post pointing the way of salvation to others, while unable himself to take a single step thereon.

Warned by such examples, let us seek in all our

efforts for the spiritual good of others, to be able to say with the Apostle, "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled of the word of life, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us." For though instances have unquestionably occurred, in which signal beneficial results have followed the preaching of the Gospel by ungodly men, this is not the normal mode of Divine procedure. It is personal experience of religion as an inward life, a living power in the heart, that imparts *unction* to active Christian effort—that adds conviction and power to testimony and commendation. He is the man to say to others, "Oh, taste and see that God is good," who has himself tasted, and from his own enjoyment can say, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." And this seems to be the chief reason why men and not angels are employed by God to carry on His cause in the world. Angels have never known, as they have never needed, redeeming grace. Having never passed through our spiritual experience, they cannot sympathise with our spiritual sorrows, or make their own state an example and encouragement for us. And therefore an angel visits Cornelius, but Peter must be sent for "to speak to him words whereby he may be saved." An angel does not himself descend to preach the Gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch, but to commission Philip to discharge that office. There is joy in heaven in presence of the angels over repenting sinners, but it is by men that God converts men. Let us seek, then, to be made first the *subjects*, and then the *mediums* of God's

grace. And for this purpose let us endeavour to have such a character as will of itself communicate good—so luminous with grace that it will as naturally radiate good as the sun radiates light. And such a character can only be formed by a complete unreserved surrender of self to Christ, to be made by His Spirit a new creature, the image of His goodness; and it can only be maintained by living in Christ and for Christ—by watching and prayer, by fasting and self-denial, by the mortification of easily besetting sins, and by keeping the appetites and passions of the body in subjection. This is a painful discipline, but a Power mightier than our own is with us, to work in us all the good pleasure of God's goodness. And the end is worthy of it all. To hear even one soul saying to us, out of the great multitude which no man can number around the Throne, that our general Christian bearing, our consistent Christian uprightness and devotion, had been the means, under God, of saving him, will surely be a blessedness for which a whole lifetime of self-denial would not be too great a sacrifice.

CHAPTER X.

WINTER LEAVES.

"This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."—PHILIPPIANS iii. 13, 14.

WINTER is called the leafless season. The boughs of the trees are naked, and the herbage of the fields is withered. The soft, green cushions of foliage that in summer made every tree like its neighbour, have disappeared, bringing out the individual shapes and the fundamental peculiarities of the woodland. Nature seems to lie at anchor in the harbour, with her sails furled, and only her masts and rigging exposed to the fury of the storm. And yet, amid this apparent universal death, the pulse of the earth has not ceased to beat. Growth has not altogether stopped. Many humble plants, such as mosses and lichens, which are torpid in summer, now begin to vegetate, and come into fruit. Even the trees themselves are not wholly leafless. *They have their winter as well as their summer foliage.* The barest tree, whose boughs make fit harp-strings for the fierce music of the blast, still possesses true characteristic leaves, although they are very inconspicuous, and would not be known as leaves except by

those who have learned that seeing is one of the fine arts, and requires cultivation. Every one is familiar with the buds which tip the extremities of every branch in spring. These are the growing points of the tree, and contain within themselves the leaves and blossoms of the coming year in an embryonic state. On the outside they are covered with dry, glossy scales, lying together like the tiles of a roof or the plates of a suit of armour. These scales are true leaves of the very lowest type, altered from the normal form to suit their altered purpose and circumstances, and may be seen not unfrequently passing into ordinary green leaves at a further stage of advancement. They are formed in spring, and continue to grow during the whole summer, though very slowly and imperceptibly, owing to the diversion of the sap from them to the foliage, behind which they are hid. As the season advances, however, the sap gradually ceases to flow to the summer leaves, which therefore ultimately fade and fall from the tree; and the last movements of it, at the end of autumn, before it becomes altogether stagnant, are directed towards the buds, in order to mature and prepare them for taking at the proper time the place of the generation of leaves that has just perished.

During winter the scales, or outer leaves of the buds, afford protection from the weather to the next year's tender miniature leaves and flowers wrapped up within them; and for this purpose they are admirably adapted by their construction. They have no pores to let out the internal heat and to let in the external cold;

they are entirely destitute of that waxy substance called chlorophyll, which forms the green colour of leaves; their usual hue being a dark brown or pale yellow. In many instances they are more or less densely clothed with a fine silky down, as in the beech and willow; or covered with glands, which exude a resinous gum, as in the horse-chestnut. Richly furnished in this way, the winter leaves, or bud-scales, effectually fulfil their purpose throughout the winter months. But in spring, the buds, stimulated by the unwonted sunshine, begin to open at their sharp extremities. And as the young green leaves within expand in the genial atmosphere, the services of the bud-scales, or covering-leaves, are no longer needed, and by and by they roll away, and fall one by one from the tree, strewing the ground beneath till it looks like a threshing-floor. Every one must be familiar with the little heaps of brown withered scales, lying at the foot of a beech or maple in April; these are the winter leaves that have fallen from these trees. Thus every tree has a double leaf-fall every year. The winter leaves, which are designed for the protection of the bud during winter, are pushed off by the growth of the summer leaves from the bud in spring; and the summer leaves, which are designed for the nourishment and growth of the tree in summer, wither and fall off in autumn, owing to the stagnation of the sap, and the maturing of the winter leaves and their contents. Cold is fatal to the summer leaves; warmth is fatal to the winter leaves. Inactivity renders useless the summer leaves; and growth

supersedes the winter leaves. The conditions suited to the existence of the one kind, are entirely unsuited to the existence of the other; and thus the Creator has wisely ordained that by the fall of the leaf in spring, and the fall of the leaf in autumn, by the alternation of summer and winter leaves, and the offices which they both respectively perform, the development of the tree should be carried on during its term of life.

Scripture is full of allusions to trees and their various parts and functions as symbols of man's life—as representatives in the natural fleeting world, not arbitrarily or fancifully chosen, but absolute and real, of the unseen and eternal realities of the heavenly kingdom. Even the physical construction of a leaf exhibits the germ of the idea, which was wrought out perfectly in the human body. They are both formed upon the same principle, and the plant in its structure evidently foreshadowed or prefigured the coming animal. The central vein of the leaf, for instance, represents the spinal column of man; the side veins of the leaf correspond with the ribs of the human skeleton, and they both perform the same purposes of strength and protection; the multitude of delicate vessels filled with sap, which ramify through the substance of the leaf, are exactly like the blood-vessels and the nerves that carry the fluid of life throughout the various parts of the body; and lastly, over the whole surface of the leaf, above and below, is spread a membrane full of pores, which absorbs light, air, and moisture, and enables the tree to carry on its functions, just as over the whole body is spread an exquisitely organized

skin, full of pores, which performs all the operations needed for man's health. Thus, resembling each other so closely, as far as the type of their physical construction is concerned, is it not reasonable to suppose that there are spiritual analogies between them as close and intimate—that the leaf or the tree has qualities for the imagination and the heart, for the mind and the soul, eminently fitted to be useful and instructive if properly understood? As Mrs. Browning says,—

> "A tree's mere firewood unless humanized;
> Which well the Greeks knew . . .
> . . . For us, we are called to mark
> A still more intimate humanity
> In this inferior nature."

To one of the most beautiful and appropriate of these analogies, I now wish to direct the attention of the reader.

Christ said, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches." Every branch that is united to Him by faith, and is partaker of His life, is tipped with buds of growth. These buds are composed of the living germ that is to form the future foliage and blossoms of Christian experience, and of those means of grace by which it is nourished and protected until it is placed in circumstances in which it can expand and act independently. In every growth of the soul there will be found two elements—one that is essential and permanent, like the inner contents of the bud; and one that is formative and temporary, like the covering scales of the bud. They both grow slowly together, and remain torpid together during a season of spiritual coldness and inactivity; but

when a spring-time of revival and progress comes, the formative and temporary element passes away, and the essential and permanent element expands, and goes on to perfection. St. Paul alludes to these two elements of Christian growth, when he speaks of forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto the things which are before. The things that were behind were the temporary winter leaves or bud-scales of his spiritual life; the reaching forth unto those things which were before was the vital essential germ of his spiritual life. And in proportion as these winter leaves fell off, so in proportion did the summer leaves which they enclosed expand and grow; in proportion as he forgot the things that were behind, so in proportion did he reach forth unto those things which were before.

The Apostle's life affords many striking illustrations of this fact. In his unconverted state, there were many things on which he prided himself—the scenes and associations of his youth, the eager sympathies of his opening intellect, and his ardent affection for the polity and religion of his fathers. He was "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." Add to these supereminent excellencies, when measured by a Jewish standard, the fact of his Roman citizenship, as a native of "no mean city," his thorough Hebrew education at the feet of Gamaliel, and his general culture as a student of Greek philosophy and

Latin thought. Well might he congratulate himself upon these possessions and acquirements, and boast, "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more." But all these natural qualifications of the man belonged to the winter or unregenerate state of his soul. They were winter leaves that hid and confined the germ of spiritual life; that for a time overlay and hindered the Spirit's striving and working within him. But although worthless as grounds of justification in the sight of God, they had their own value in training and fitting him for the position which he afterwards occupied, and his work as the great Apostle of the Gentiles. They subserved the same purposes in the life of St. Paul which the bud-scales or winter leaves perform in the economy of the bud. They afforded protection and nourishment. All that he had acquired in the schools of Tarsus and Jerusalem was laid as a rich gift upon the altar of Christ, and consecrated to His service. The modes of Jewish and Greek thought became wider and clearer channels of heavenly truth. His ardour as a persecutor made him more ardent still as an Apostle. The same devotion which impelled him to go to Damascus to vindicate the Jewish faith, led him to preach the Gospel in the isles of the Gentiles, and to the utmost limits of the known world. The measure of his fierce zeal on the occasion of Stephen's death, was the measure of that self-sacrificing love which made him even wish that he himself were accursed from Christ for his brethren's sake, his kinsmen according to the flesh. And when the great crisis of

his life came—the spring-time of his conversion—and he was brought face to face with the glory and the love of that Jesus whose way he sought to destroy—blessed airs from heaven blew around him, and a light exceeding the brightness of the noonday sun shone upon him ; and in this warm genial atmosphere of grace, the germ of spiritual life unfolded itself within, and burst its wrappings. Old forms ceased to have any hold upon his affections and homage. He passed from Jewish bondage to Christian liberty. He died to his former self and all its experiences, and lived a new life in Jesus. Those things that were gain to him before, he now counted loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Scales fell from his soul as well as from his eyes. The winter-leaves of his natural possessions and attainments having served their purpose of preparation, now dropped off, and the summer leaves of grace—the blossoms of holiness, the fruits of righteousness—had full liberty to grow and develop themselves in the new world that opened up before him. But we must not suppose that the dropping, in the fulness of the new life awakened in him, of those winter leaves that had been so beautiful and precious to him, was without effort or pain. It sometimes needs a severe gust of wind to shake off the scales that still linger around the bud, although it has expanded. And it was with a sore wrench that St. Paul tore himself away from all his former cherished associations. The three days which he spent at Damascus, in which he was blind, and did neither eat nor drink, afford a proof to us of the unspeakable mental anguish

through which the transition between the old and the new man took place.

But even in his converted state there were many "things behind" which St. Paul required to forget. The branch of a tree puts forth bud after bud in its gradual growth and enlargement. The bud of this spring opens, drops its winter leaves, and expands its summer leaves; these summer leaves, having by their agency added a cubit to the stature of the branch, pass away; and the added growth in its turn puts forth a new bud covered with its scales or winter leaves, which drop off the following spring, and allow the imprisoned summer leaves once more to unfold themselves in the sunny air. And thus the process of growth goes on by an alternate contraction and expansion, as it were—by the life of the branch being shut up in the bud in winter, and unfolded in foliage and blossoms in summer. Winter leaves must be formed at *every stage of growth*, in order that the vital germ may be nourished and protected; winter leaves must be dropped at every stage of growth, in order that the vital germ may develop itself into all the visible glories of the tree. And so was it with St. Paul. His spiritual life from the beginning to the end was a series of fresh beginnings—a continual going back and undoing the past and commencing once more anew. Not once merely at conversion, but often in his converted state, had he to form and to drop the winter leaves of the soul in the process of spiritual growth. There were many things by which his spiritual life was nourished and guarded—that were helpful in forming his Christian

character and carrying on the work of grace in his soul—which had to be blotted out of his thoughts and put into the background, if he would go on to perfection. There were outward things apparent to all—such as his consuming and almost superhuman toil for upwards of twenty years in the propagation of Christianity—founding church after church in the various centres of the world's civilization; the hardships and privations of his numerous travels by sea and land, that all men might hear the tidings of the Gospel; the frequent persecutions and sufferings which he endured for the sake of the truth; his self-denial in giving up all pleasure, honour, and ambition to the one hope of serving the Master whom he loved; the disappointments and triumphs of that long and chequered time which closed only when he became a prisoner in Rome, and underwent the last brief agony on the Ostian Road. There were inward and deeply personal things beneath all this outward activity for others,—such as the conflicts, the failures, and successes of his own spiritual history; the "self-masteries by which, one after another, each faculty and power of his soul was brought into subjection to the will of God;" the mortification of sin, the crucifixion of self, the following after holiness. All these outward and inward things were essential for the time being to his spiritual welfare. Through these, by the blessing of the Spirit, he attained to a most remarkable degree of personal sanctification—to a standing-place in the Christian course so far above the ordinary level of attainment, that imitation seems almost impossible. But still, useful and indispensable as they might be, these

experiences were mere bud-scales—winter leaves, which, if retained and cherished, would hinder his upward and onward growth. He reached forth unto those things which were before. He craved for a higher ideal. "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but this one thing I do—I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;"—this was his conviction, this was his resolve. To brood over the failures of the irretrievable past would discourage his hopes and paralyse his energies. To recall past excellencies and labours would be to foster spiritual pride and self-sufficiency. And therefore all those formative processes—those preparatory means of his growth and advancement—must be left behind—fall off his spirit as the winter leaves fall from off the expanded bud when their work is done. Free and unfettered by the past, untroubled by the sad memories of failure, unelated by the remembrance of attainments already made, forgetting the things that are behind, he must reach forth unto those things which are before.

Are not the lessons of such a life very broad and intelligible? We, too, are called upon to act in the same spirit, and to follow, however feebly and remotely, in the same footsteps. Forgetfulness of what was behind was an essential element in the Christian progress of St. Paul. It is also an essential element in the progress of every believer. In our conversion, we must separate ourselves, like him, from the associations of our unregenerate state, and count those things which were then gain to us loss, in order that we may win Christ, and be found in Him.

There must be a forgetfulness of the ungodly excellencies that distinguished us in our careless days—the natural gifts and good deeds upon which we prided ourselves—the things that caused us to have confidence in the flesh. These winter leaves must fall off, when the vernal season of grace has come, and we who were dead in trespasses and sins are made alive unto God. The work of grace cannot be carried on in combination with the affinities of our former habits, and the memories and conditions of our former life. Scripture repeatedly enforces this truth under the image of buying and selling. We cannot have the blessings of salvation without selling all that we have in our possession and affections. In exchange for them there must be a letting go, not of former faults and sins merely, but even of former excellencies. And selling to Christ what we have, is just a foregoing and forgetting of it so far as we are concerned. Such good qualities as we displayed in our unconverted state, and for which Jesus, looking on us, might love us, as He did the rich young ruler, may, as in St. Paul's case, have contributed to form our Christian character, and give it its peculiar individual stamp and bias. But having done so, they have answered their purpose, and are no longer to be dwelt upon for self-valuation. They belonged to a past stage of our history, with which we can now have no spiritual sympathy. And therefore we must be separated from them, and all old things must pass away and all things become new.

But not at this initiatory stage merely is there to be a discarding of the things that are behind. At every

subsequent stage of our growth in grace there must be the same winnowing process. We carry onward with us in our spiritual progress the essential and the non-essential—that which is temporal and subsidiary, and that which is to be paramount and abiding, encased within each other as the kernel is in the husk, as the germ of the bud is encased in its external scales or covering leaves. By a course of prosperity our souls are made to unfold in gratitude to God and beneficence to our fellow-men. In a season of sorrow and suffering we are made more heavenly-minded. But the means which produced these desirable ends are not to be cherished as if they were the end and not the means. We are not to be proud of our prosperity, or to brood morbidly over our adversity. Rather are we to keep them in the back-ground, and to prize the character they have formed more than the means of its formation. So, also, a state of spiritual elevation may have greatly contributed to advance the tone of our spirits and raise us above the world; or a state of spiritual depression may have shown us our weakness and insufficiency, and thus made us grow downward at the root in humility. Through the enjoyment of peace in believing, or through dissatisfaction with ourselves; through defeats and triumphs, failures and successes, we have advanced nearer that perfection which is our aim. For this result we are to glorify God, but we are not to dwell with complacency upon the means by which we arrived at it; we are not to linger fondly over, and boast to ourselves or others of, the providential dispensations and the inward experiences,

through which we have reached our present stage of advancement. These winter leaves that cherished and nourished our growth in grace must drop off from time to time, with each new attainment that we make, in order that, untrammelled by the joys or the sorrows of the past, our faith may be sanguine and active, and take possession more and more of the unseen and unimagined things which God hath prepared for them that love Him:

> "That we may rise on stepping-stones
> Of our dead selves to higher things."

But not the means of growth and formative processes of the Christian character only, must be left behind and forgotten; the very ends, the growths themselves, must also be superseded. In a certain sense each attainment must be the bud-covering of a succeeding attainment, and fall away when it is matured and unfolded. Each new growth must prepare the way for another. *There must be a double leaf-fall from the soul as well as from the tree.* The summer leaves that are cherished must drop off as well as the winter leaves that cherished them. The foliage, the flower, the fruit itself are not the ends, but the means, the stages of growth of the tree; and therefore they all fall away, one after another, in order that the tree may grow on, and reach past them to its ideal of perfection.* And so the summer foliage, the

* All nature is deciduous. The branch is sacrificed that the blossom may be produced; the blossom falls that the fruit may be formed; the fruit drops off that the seed may grow. Man's body itself is shed like a winter leaf, in order that the body of the resurrection may arise from its germs. We have a striking instance of

beautiful blossoms of the soul, the very fruitage of grace, must also be left behind, if the soul would grow and go on to perfection. To be continually looking back upon what has been done,—to rest satisfied with our attainments at any point, is to forego our glorious privilege, is to check our development, and mix up much of self, and sin, and the world with our pure and heavenly growth. It is amazing how soon, when we cease to forget the things that are behind and remain stationary, we degenerate. Self-sufficiency and self-righteousness become cunningly veiled in the disguises of our sanctity; our prayers and expectations become rooted in presumption; our works of beneficence are associated with pride and vanity; the very ministry of Christ itself becomes an occasion of self-indulgence. The means of our growth become our ends, and they encase us with a hard covering which is impervious to the tender influences of heaven, and shut out the Spirit of God, and render an after access of growth exceedingly difficult. Hence it is never at any time good for us to rest upon the past or the present—to dwell with complacency upon our experiences, our good qualities, our gifts of grace. We may not plead that we have done much, for much is

onward growth, in the blossoms formed within the blossoms of our common garden polyanthus, familiarly known as "hose in hose." In the cowslip, the ordinary flower sometimes produces a stem which bears upon its summit another cluster of flowers. This, which is a monstrosity in our species, is the normal peculiarity of the Imperial Primrose of the mountains of Java. This remarkable Alpine plant produces several tiers of blossoms, one rising above the other to the height of several feet, like a Chinese pagoda.

not enough, nay, is even prejudicial, as we have seen, if we can do more. No growth can be carried on without a discarding of the means of growth. The cotyledon leaves of our nature must drop off, or give place to the true leafy structures. At every stage, while something is acquired, something must be abandoned. While the future expands, the past must contract. What is most necessary to our growing sanctification and likeness to Christ through the means of grace, is ceasing to depend upon these means of grace, and an honest confession of the weakness and worthlessness of all our own efforts. The future invites us with its endless capabilities of progress. To the future, therefore, let us turn the longings and endeavours of our souls ; and forgetting the things that are behind—the things through which and by means of which we have advanced thus far—dropping the winter leaves of our past memories and experiences—let us reach forth unto the things which are before.

St. Paul exhorted the Hebrew Christians to leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and to go on to perfection. And truly such an exhortation is still greatly needed. Very many believers stop short at the very initial processes of grace, and imagine that these are the final ends—that nothing more can be desired or attained. Imputed sanctification is combined with imputed righteousness, so that when a sinner is justified, he is supposed without any change wrought in him to be sanctified at the same time, and at once made holy and meet for heaven. The whole spiritual history of the soul is so contained and "epitomized in one act of sacrifice as to

make further longings and efforts superfluous." Conversion is the whole of salvation, not merely a renunciation of the past, but an insurance of the future beyond risk of forfeiture. Pardon and peace, through believing in Christ, is all that they need obtain. Ignorant of the law, that has no exception in the natural or spiritual world, that life is never complete at first, they believe that they are complete in Christ, and want nothing more to be done in them or by them until they depart hence to a better world. And thus they are perfectly satisfied with their condition. They have attained their ideal. They go backwards and forwards on the same spot, like a door on its hinges, conning their first principles, spelling their alphabet of grace, and making no progress whatever. They have a narrow and low idea of the Redeemer's work, and, in consequence, lead a spiritual life that has no enlargement and little enjoyment in it. Their sins sit so easily upon them, that they do not lament them: or if they are sorrowful, their sorrow is without resolute effort at amendment; is, in fact, an acquiescent self-reproach, which reconciles the mind to the culpability which it deplores. Surely it needs no argument to expose such a palpable and foolish error. It is as if the embryo that began to germinate remained always in the seed, instead of spreading out its roots past the first source of its nourishment into the wide soil around. It is as if the life of the tree always remained in the bud, instead of casting off its wrappings, and expanding into summer foliage, blossoms, and fruit. Conversion is, indeed, all-essential, for while the heart is unchanged and

the spirit unrenewed, there can be neither life nor growth; but it is merely the commencement of a course that must be gradually pursued. Justification is in its very nature perfect; it is complete at once, and can never make any advancement. Conversion, justification, pardon, and peace in believing, these are the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. Under the shelter of these winter leaves of the spiritual life, the changes and developments of sanctification are carried on. We are justified, that we may be sanctified. We are restored to the favour of God, that God's image may be restored in us. We have the title to a divine life, in order that we may have the principle and the enjoyment of it. And therefore, these first principles of the doctrine of Christ should open and give place to the advancing work of grace, instead of hermetically sealing the soul and preventing its growth. They are not, indeed, to be dropped as mere bud-scales, as mere means to an end—for they are the basis upon which all the subsequent efforts of the spiritual life are to be made. But just as in the unfolding buds of the lilac and horse-chestnut tree, the scales, or the covering leaves of winter, pass through intermediate changes—in the one into the blades of the leaf, and in the other into the leaf-stalks—so the principles of the doctrine of Christ are to be carried on in the growth, and their substance is to be used up and modified, as it were, in the expansion of the soul. In this sense the things that are behind are to be forgotten.

It is vain to tell the believer to forget the things that are behind, to discard the preparatory means by which

he advances in piety, by a mere temporary effort of will. He cannot do so. By wishing and striving ever so much, he cannot divest himself of what he has found to be an encumbrance. It is only by growing, by going on to perfection, that he can get rid of the things which are no longer essential, just as the child, by its growth, forgets the milk of the babe, and the youth forgets the sports of childhood, and the middle-aged man outlives the dreams and illusions of his youth. "When I was a child," says the Apostle, "I spake as a child, I understood as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." What the Christian cannot remove, except by a violent destructive wrench, will fall off easily and of its own accord, when superseded and ren dered effete by growth. So long as he is torpid and stationary, the things that are behind cleave to him, and cover his spiritual life from sight and confine it within the narrowest range—shut it in from the blessed rains and sunbeams of heaven, as the natural bud is shut in by its scaly coverings when in its dormant state in winter. But when a season of revival comes, and the captivity of the soul is turned, then the vigorous growth that ensues pushes off the former things, with which it remained content, and unfolds itself towards completeness in Christ. Thus we see that to forget the things that are behind effectually, the only method is to outgrow them. To this growth and development we should be farther stimulated by the consideration that a bud whose growth is arrested becomes transformed into a thorn. If our winter leaves—the experiences that contribute to

form our character, and which are appropriate to the various stages of our growth—be allowed to remain unchanged and unforgotten, and to choke up our spiritual life so as to arrest its advancement, they will be changed into thorns. The peace that we trust in will vanish in sorrow. The progress that makes us proud and self complacent will become a retrogression, and pierce us through with shame. The attainment with which we are satisfied becomes a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet us lest we be exalted above measure. It is no unusual thing to see a branch of a tree whose vital activity is so enfeebled that its growth is arrested. Its terminal bud loses the power of throwing off its winter leaves, *because no summer leaves* form in its interior. The bud then dies, and the branch withers and becomes fit for the burning. And so it is, alas! no unusual thing to see branches in Christ whose spiritual life is so weak that their growth is at a standstill. They lose the power of forgetting the things that are behind, because they are not reaching forth unto those things which are before. They are therefore in danger of perishing. Only by growing can we be holy and happy—able at once to forget the things that are behind, and to reach forth unto those things which are before. And for constant, uninterrupted growth there is ample provision in Zion.

There is a sense, indeed, in which we cannot forget the things that are behind, strive as we may. The winter leaves or bud-scales of a tree leave behind them when they drop off, a peculiar mark or scar on the

bark, just as the summer leaves do when they fall. On every branch a series of these scars, in the shape of rings closely set together, may be seen, indicating the points where each growing shoot entered on the stage of rest. And so every experience through which we pass, every act we perform, goes into the very substance of our being, and we can never be after it what we were before it. We cannot undo our deeds, or altogether escape the consequences that have followed them. The past is indelible, and the memory of it remains like a scar upon the soul.* Not more thickly

* Internally and externally there are marks on every tree, which enable us to realize its exact vegetative condition during any one of the previous years of its life. Cut a transverse section of an exogenous tree, and you will find the record of every year that it has grown faithfully preserved in the rings of the wood. The peculiarities of every summer and winter that have passed over it, may be accurately deciphered by one skilled in this kind of tree-palmistry. This large, broad ring tells me that the summer was unusually wet; this thin, compact, and even ring indicates that the season in which it was formed was very warm and bright; and this other ring, rough and scarred, alternately thin and broad, announces that the layer of tissue was deposited amid storms of wind and rain, with alternate sunshine and chill ungenial weather. The very fossil-tree, petrified into a hard stone, and dug up from beneath hundreds of feet of solid rock, preserves the most delicate of these cabalistic signs uninjured. Place a thin transparent slice of the fossil-wood under the microscope, and it not only shows at once that it formed part of a species of extinct palm or pine-tree; but it also reveals the kind of weather which prevailed when it was green and flourishing thousands of ages ago—the transient sunshine and the passing shower, and the wayward wind of long-forgotten summers. It is strange to see, even in our common articles of furniture, the signs and memories of the green forest life through which the timber passed in its growth many years ago, and which the carpenter's tools and the roughest usage have

is a branch covered with its annual sets of rings, indicating the position of the winter leaves and the terminal bud of each season, than is the soul covered

not been able to obliterate. A chair or a table whispers to us in this way secrets more wonderful far than the so-called revelations of spiritualism. It brings into our presence the fauns and dryads of the woods, to converse with us regarding the mysteries of their lonely haunts. It stands connected with the stars in their courses; and through the signs of its vegetable zodiac, the sun has passed as truly as over its own path in the heavens.

But it is not in the interior of trees alone—needing the aid of the axe to lay them bare—that we see the experiences of their past history. There are external as well as internal marks. We see very conspicuously displayed on the twigs of the beech and the horse-chestnut, for instance, scars, dots, or rings, which show where the winter and summer leaves were united to the stem, and indicate the age of the shoot on which they were produced. On a twig of the horse-chestnut the summer leaves have left behind a large cicatrix, shaped like a horseshoe, marked by several black dots like nails, being the broken ends of the bundles of woody fibre which, uniting together, formed the leaf-stalk, and, separating again at its top, formed the mid-rib of the leaflets. If the scar has five dots, we know that there were five leaflets to each leaf; if there are seven dots, then each leaf had seven leaflets. Below this broad, open, horseshoe-like cicatrix left by the summer foliage, occur the contracted ring-like scars of the winter leaves; and the number of the rings indicates the number of the bud-scales or winter leaves. The interval between two sets of these rings marks out a single year's growth; and the variations in its length during different years, indicates the varying amount of active vitality displayed by the twig. If the interval is short, there was little growth made that summer, owing to cold ungenial weather; if the interval is long, the twig grew rapidly amid favourable circumstances. The number of leaf-scars in each interval between two sets of rings, enables us to tell the exact number of leaves that were put forth during that summer. If a twig has on it, say ten sets of rings and ten scars, then we know that it is exactly ten years old; that it stopped growing ten times and produced ten

with the impressions produced by the experiences of the past spiritual life. But though the things that are behind cannot in this sense be forgotten, they should not be allowed to hang around us like burdens which impede or frustrate all our efforts at improvement. The ghost-like memories of our sins should not be permitted to haunt us, mocking our repentance as hypocritical, and making our hearts sink down in self-contempt and despair of renewing efforts so often defeated. As the branch is not impeded in its development by its scars, but carries them on in its growth, so the Christian's progress in grace should not be hindered by the memories that are indelible, the deeds that are irrevocable. Out of his past experience he is to gather what will be of use to him in his future course—a better knowledge of himself, of his weak points and besetting sins, a firmer faith in God and a humbler walk with Christ; and all the rest is to be forgotten. He is to remember the failures of the past in order to magnify the mercy that forgave. He is to remember former seasons of spiritual

generations of winter leaves, and again commenced growing ten times and produced ten generations of summer leaves; while the peculiar appearances presented by these sets of marks, place in a moment before our eyes the exact history of the twig during its whole past life, the amount and the date of the growth it made, the number of the leaves engaged in its construction, the character of the weather to which it was exposed, and the nature of the circumstances in which it was placed. These hieroglyphics of nature are as significant as regards the peculiar variable history of each branch of a tree, as the cuneiform inscriptions on the palaces of Nineveh are significant of the life of the ancient people who inhabited them. Nothing thus perishes without leaving a record of it behind.

activity and fervour for his encouragement, and that he may be reminded of what he was if he should sink into a state of declension. "Remember whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works."

Taking a comprehensive view of the universe, we find that everything has a special object to perform, and when that object is accomplished the agency perishes. The material system of nature, with all its wonderful and beneficent physical arrangements, is intended to be the abode of man, to minister to his wants, and to develop and educate his mental and moral powers; and when that purpose is accomplished, the prediction of the Apostle will be fulfilled—"The elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the whole earth and all the works therein shall be burnt up." Life on earth is not an end, but a means—a state of discipline and preparation for something higher and nobler beyond, and is therefore transitory in its duration. It has a deeper spring than the ordinary sources of pleasure or pain, a wider scope than the round of common duties, a loftier purpose than the efforts to procure a brief and petty subsistence. It has more reality than toil, more recompense than wealth or fame or enjoyment. All the circumstances of this world are winter leaves, nourishing and protecting the bud of immortality, and destined, when that bud is unfolded in the eternal spring, to fall off and perish. So, too, the means of grace are the scaffolding by the aid of which the spiritual life is built up, and will be removed as a deformity when the building is com-

pleted. Forms of church government, human ordinances, and those intellectual labours which are employed in their establishment and defence, are adapted only to a state of imperfection, to the condition of individuals preparing for a higher existence; and, so far from being ultimate objects, are only instruments and agencies, to be discarded when their purposes are accomplished. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." Everything that is purely subordinate and distinctive in religion—everything that is extraneous to the spiritual nature, however necessary to educate it—everything that bears the stamp of man's weakness, ignorance, or sinfulness, will vanish as the winter leaves of time from the expanding bud of everlasting life; and out of the wrecks of earth only a living faith in the atoning Saviour, the hope that maketh not ashamed, and the charity which is the bond of perfectness, will escape. "And *now* abideth faith, hope, charity, these three."

It is through loss that all gain in this world is made. The winter leaves must fall that the summer leaves may grow. But in heaven a different law of development will prevail. In the trees of warm climates the buds have no winter leaves or protective scales, being simply formed of the ordinary leaves rolled up; consequently they expand in growth without losing anything. And

so it will be in the eternal summer above. There will be a constant unfolding of the fulness of immortal life from glory to glory; but there will be no loss of the processes and experiences through which the unfolding will take place. The means and the end will be one and the same. There will be a constant reaching forth unto those things which are before, but there will be no forgetting the things that are behind.

A GRAVE BESIDE A STREAM.

"For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."—REV. vii. 17.

How strange the union of the stream and grave!
Eternal motion and eternal rest;
Earth's billow fixed, beside the transient wave
Upon the water's breast.

The summer cloud upon the height distils
Each sunny ripple hurrying swiftly past;
And man's proud life, like fleeting vapour, fills
This wave of earth at last.

The streamlet, through the churchyard's solemn calm,
Sounds like an ancient prophet's voice of faith,
Chanting beside the grave a glorious psalm
Of life in midst of death.

The living water and the burial mound
Proclaim in parable, that through death's sleep
Flows on for aye, though none may hear its sound,
Life's river still and deep.

The grave like Laban's "heap of witness" seems,
Raised 'twixt the sleeper and the world's alarm,
O'er which no anxious cares or evil dreams
May pass to do him harm.

No more he wrestles by the brook of life;
The night is past—the Angel stands revealed;
He now enjoys the blessing wrung from strife,
And every wound is healed.

CHAPTER XI.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

"And the light shineth in darkness."—JOHN i. 5.

THE use of light is to illumine or reveal. Without light there can be no vision. The eye and the light are so wonderfully adapted to each other, that by their mutual co-operation we are enabled to see. When complete darkness envelopes the earth, we see neither the shape nor the colour of any object. All within the horizon is reduced to one uniform blackness and emptiness. On the contrary, when the sun rises and pours his universal daylight over the world, a beauteous scene of varied forms and harmonious colours is created, as it were, out of the seeming void. Colour is the flower of light, and has no existence apart from light; and form and outline can only be distinguished when traced out for us by the same luminous pencil. And yet, paradoxical as it may seem, *light conceals as well as reveals.* Extremes meet here, and excess of light blinds as much as excess of darkness. At mid-day the unprotected eye cannot gaze upon the sun; when it attempts to do so for the shortest period, it sees nothing in the dazzling radi-

ance, and on turning to other objects a filmy cloud for a while interposes and obscures the vision. When the sunlight is concentrated in its full effulgence upon an object, its hue and shape are lost in a uniform white glare; when the vivid summer noon broods over the landscape, its varied details are rendered vague and indistinct in a dim haze of light. Many objects are entirely hid from us by light. The stars are shining at noon as truly as at midnight, but the veil of light conceals them from our view. The phosphorescence of the sea is as fully displayed in the day as in the night, though we do not see it. The fires that are burning constantly upon the volcano-peaks—the Vesta-altars of the earth—have their splendour paled by the sunlight. It needs the tender twilight to bring out the exquisite brilliancy of the evening star; and the midnight gloom of winter to show the illimitable spaces beyond the sun, and to cover the sky with the glories of Orion and the Pleiades, of Arcturus and his sons. It needs the sable curtains of darkness to fall, ere the pillar of lurid cloud that ascends all day from Vesuvius becomes a pillar of fire, lighting up the firmament with its crimson glow. It needs the solar lamp to be extinguished and the theatre of nature darkened, to show to us the tropic sea in some measure as St. John saw the mystic sea before the throne—a sea of glass, as it were, mingled with fire.

Light cannot be seen in light. The more luminous overpowers or extinguishes the feebler. We cannot see the light of a candle if we hold it up against the sun; and the recently discovered lime or Drummond light, whose

brilliancy is such that few eyes can stand its dazzling glare, becomes as black as a coal when placed between us and the full sunlight. It needs the background of darkness to bring out light. Darkness and light, shade and sunshine, together make vision. Were it all light we could not see, any more than we should if it were all dark; and the face of nature without its shading—like a Chinese painting—would be featureless. The body of the sun itself, the great source of light, is dark and non-luminous; changing spots of greater or less dimensions appear on its glowing disc, and show its opaque inner constitution. And from this interior atmosphere of darkness radiate the heat and light that vivify the planets of our system. This solar light, too, passes through spaces of intensest darkness and coldness, without sensibly affecting them, in order to reach our atmosphere and illumine our world. And finally, every ray of solar light that comes to us passes through the transparent medium of the retina, and on its way to the brain is absorbed in a black membrane that lines the inside of the back part of the eye. This black membrane, from its perfect opacity, not only completely absorbs the rays of light, but darkens the interior of the eye, and so prevents indistinctness of vision through the straying of the rays of light. In this little darkened chamber of the eye, the world within and the world without hold their twilight tryst, and reveal to each other by means of light the secrets of the universe. Thus, the light of the sun comes from its own interior darkness, passes through the darkness of space on its way to us, and finally penetrates

through the darkness of the eye to the audience-chamber of the soul, there to be transformed into intellectual light. Truly the solar light shineth in darkness; and we see all physical things through a glass darkly.

Passing upwards from a lower to a higher platform of thought, we find that as it is in regard to material light, so it is in regard to spiritual light. It too shineth in darkness. The Apostle John spoke in his Gospel of our Saviour under the beautiful emblem of "the light of the world." He it is that brightens and beautifies every earthly object; that reveals the unseen and the unknown, whose words and works enlighten not only mankind, but the whole universe. He is Himself the essential attribute of spiritual health and life and progress. His life is the light of men; and without Him is death. But it needed the darkness of sin—the strange awful shadow of evil which crept from the abyss over the world when man fell—to bring out the full brightness and beauty of that heavenly light. It was sin that brought God down to man in the incarnation of His Son. He who dwelleth in light which is inaccessible and full of glory, whom no man hath seen or can see, becomes visible in Jesus, the express image of His person, through the darkness of man's ruin. Had man not sinned, there would have been much in God which Adam, in his state of innocence, never would have known. I dare not say that Adam's knowledge of God was inferior to ours, but it was a different kind of knowledge; he had not that special manifestation which was destined for fallen humanity alone. Nay, more; had man

not sinned, there would have been much in God which even the angels would never have discovered. These pure and holy beings could not see God owing to the light which their own love and adoration threw around Him. They veiled their faces with their wings in all their approaches to Him. But the manifold wisdom of God is made known to these bright principalities of heaven through the fall and restoration of man. They desire to look into the things that concern the salvation of the human race, in order that in them they may see *reflected* the knowledge of God's glory, which they could not obtain by a direct study of His attributes.

It needed the black background of man's guilt to bring out in all their glory for the admiration of the universe the wonders of redeeming love. We know that God is merciful and just and good, but it is sin that has given to us the blessed knowledge. His more abounding grace is made known in the midst of our abounding iniquity. His love that passeth knowledge is gauged by the standard that He so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. Our own sad experience has given to us clearer insight into the perfections of His nature, and enabled us in fuller measure to understand the deep thoughts of the Infinite Mind. Just as the dark and vaporous layers of the atmosphere investing our earth at sunset, by absorbing and decomposing the rays of light, deprive the sun of his dazzling fierceness, and fill the western sky with crimson hues; so the dark moral vapours that have risen from our earth in the

sunset of our race, by modifying and softening the character of God's revelation of Himself, have brought out new excellences in His nature, and filled the horizon of our faith with glowing colours of love before unknown. It is true that all that the Fall disclosed was eternally in His character, that not a trace has been added to His personal glories by the work of redemption. But these pre-existent glories have been tangibly expressed and produced in real evidence before us; these otherwise inaccessible perfections have been poured out into the world's bosom, and opened up even to our sight, in the shadow of our sin. And through the mild softness of the Shechinah cloud, in which, in condescension to our weakness and sinfulness, He now wraps Himself, we can gaze undazzled into the innermost centre of the sapphire light, and behold at the burning core of the uncreated glory, upon which none before could look and live, a heart beating with love and tenderness to man—God in Christ reconciling a guilty world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses.

When the Evangelist says that the light shineth in darkness, he appears to refer primarily to the period of our Saviour's appearance on earth. That was a peculiarly dark era in human history. All the ages previous to the Incarnation were dark ages, times of shadow and type, in which men were groping blindly after heavenly truth, if haply they might find it. But the age of Jesus surpassed them all in the wide extent of its sorrow and the poignancy of its suffering. Just as, in the period immediately anterior to the Flood, human wickedness had reached its

highest pitch and was fully ripe for destruction; so, in the period of our Saviour's appearance, human wretchedness had attained its maximum, and was calling loudly for deliverance. Fearfully dark is the picture of the times which St. Paul draws, as it were in Indian ink, all shade and no sunshine. The peace which prevailed in the vast Roman empire was the peace of exhaustion, not of contentment. Social life was corrupt to the very core; and such thought as existed was the mere iridescence that shone on the seething fetid waters of licentiousness and infidelity. Life stained by reckless passion, blunted by vicious excess, wearied itself out in its vain restless search after happiness, so that suicide was openly recommended by the wisest counsellors as the best mode of ending the fitful fever. Never was the need of a Saviour more keenly felt than when the midnight heavens over Bethlehem—fit symbol of the dark and awful sin of the age—were illumined with the vision of angels, and the glad tidings of "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will to all mankind," sounded in the ears of the watching shepherds. The True Light shone indeed in deepest darkness, and the signs of the coming salvation appeared with brighter lustre because of the universal gloom.

And as that incarnate Light moved in its short earthly orbit, how softly and beautifully its rays shone amid the twilight shadows! The clouds of suffering that rose before it, transfused by its radiance, showed their silver lining. Blindness opened its long-sealed eyes, and saw at one and the same sublime moment the beauty of earth

and the glory of heaven. Even death became a sleep from which the weary one rose strengthened and refreshed. Sunless hearts were thawed by His rays, and a new life of light and love was generated in them. The tainted air was sweetened by His breath; and His touch diffused a healing virtue through all the bitter springs of nature. Evil of every shape and hue cast its baleful shadow on His path only to vanish in the Light of His presence. Yes! that meek and lowly Light, that did not cry, nor lift up nor cause His voice to be heard in the street, amid the splendour of human pride and the haunts of wealth and pleasure was pale and unheeded, like a hydrogen flame in daylight; but in the presence of human want and woe it shone forth in wonderful brightness and power, like that flame of hydrogen when burning on a piece of lime at night. Gleams of the indwelling brightness shone through the earthly veil, when suffering—the shadow of sin—was near. The God incarnate, concealed from the wise and the prudent, from the prosperous and self-sufficient, was revealed through the meekness of His mortal guise to the simple and the weak, to the mourner and the child. Then, too, when the *man* in Him was most conspicuous, the *God* was also most conspicuous. His divinity shone brightest when His humanity appeared most perfect. Over the manger of His humiliation shone the star of His glory; the poverty and meanness of His birth were counterbalanced by the grandeur and power of His words and works, and the rejection of men, by the vision of angels. It was He who thirsted by the well of Sychar, that could

give living water, of which, if a man drink, he shall thirst no more. It was the weary worn-out sleeper in the boat on Galilee who, when roused from His pillow, bade the winds and the waves be still. It was the dying Jesus, nailed helplessly to the cross, numbered among the transgressors, and despised and rejected of men, who said to the penitent thief by His side, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." The Light was indeed seen to be very God, when it was seen to be very man. And when at last, blazing brightly for a moment on the Mount of Transfiguration, that Light descended into and passed on its lonely way within the awful shadows of the dark valley, what sunset glories does it disclose! Brighter and more beautiful does it become as the dark clouds prevail against it, and it is about to disappear below the horizon. The flaring torches of the robber-band amid the midnight olives of Gethsemane, reveal to us a scene of unparalleled suffering, and yet of noblest self-sacrifice. In that hour and power of darkness we have a whole heaven of love lit up, into whose starry depths unfathomable we gaze, overwhelmed with wonder and awe.

And then think of the eclipse of that Light in death When are astronomers enabled most thoroughly to study the sun? Not when his meridian splendour is dazzling their eyes and covering the secrets of his nature with a veil of insufferable glory. It is when the dark disc of the moon entirely covers his face, and there is a total eclipse. During such a crisis, phenomena are observed which cannot be seen at any other time, and a detailed account of them would fill volumes. Glimpses are then

given of his constitution—the materials of his surface—the depth and nature of his atmospheres. His physical history, so far as it can be known to us, is disclosed by the peculiar signs which then appear. Now, as it is with the natural sun, so it is with the Sun of Righteousness. During the awful eclipse of His death, when He passed under the mysterious shadow which falls upon all men—during the darkness that overspread the land for the last three hours that He hung upon the cross, and which was the outward symbol to the spectators of the extremity of loneliness and sorrow which He endured, we have a display of His love and grace such as we receive not from all His words and works besides. His greatness and goodness culminate in that eclipse. That life, which is the most beautiful and perfect of lives, expands into blossom on the cross. All the excellences of His life are there sublimated to the highest degree, and converge, as it were, into a single focus beneath a single glance. The light that shines amid the profound darkness of Calvary, brings out into full relief all the features and extent of His teaching and example, and vivifies and makes them the power and the wisdom of God unto salvation. The perfect fulness of His trust in God is most strikingly disclosed amid the very horrors of the spiritual darkness—amid the awful sense of divine abandonment that overwhelmed Him. The same cry—"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"—which proclaimed the extremity of His trial, witnessed to the greatness of His faith and the perfection of His innocence. The burden of darkness lay upon Him apparently

unrelieved to the very close;—He sank out of life under the pressure without one ray of heavenly comfort to cheer Him—and yet, with His last breath, He commits Himself into the keeping of Him by whom He had felt Himself forsaken—"Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Where else can we see faith and patience, and trust in God and love to men, and holy innocence, so signally displayed as here? And when we think, too, of the light shed on the work of redemption by the darkness of the cross, how are our ideas of God's holiness and mercy exalted; how are our convictions of man's sinfulness and necessity deepened! We see the evil and desperateness of man's sin in a way that we could never otherwise have seen it. We know the greatness of man's primitive excellence and dignity, and the estimation in which he was held by Heaven, when even God Himself consented to die for him. We are reminded of the true loftiness of man's nature, a nature worthy of pardon and redemption, worthy to be the object of immeasurable love. When the Just thus suffered for the unjust, and our Brother born exhibited all that man has ever conceived but never realized of self-sacrifice and purity, of faith and love, we are shown what man may become; and can look forward with hope to the day of restoration that shall place redeemed man above angels and archangels nearest the throne.

And as thus with the true Light of the world, so with every lesser light that He kindles to be a revelation of Himself—it shineth in darkness. This is pre-eminently true of the Church. Its light is beautifully symbolized

by the seven-branched candlestick which stood in the holy place of the Levitical tabernacle. That holy place was the pattern of the Church on earth, just as the Holy of Holies was the pattern of the Church in heaven. The common garish light of day was excluded by the coverings of goats' hair and badgers' skins; and a profound darkness created within. In this mystical darkness the perfumed light of the golden candlestick shone unceasingly, as a token that the light of the Church is not the light of nature, but the light of grace; that, dark itself, it is illuminated solely by the spiritual light which the Lord of the Church supplies. It was the duty of Aaron to trim this candlestick and supply it with the needful oil, and keep its golden stem and branches bright, and its lamps perpetually burning. We see in imagination the high priest, in his gorgeous dress, moving about among the lamps that dimly illuminated the darkness of the place; and we see in that ghostly earthly vision the type of the glorious heavenly vision which appeared to the seer in Patmos, of a greater than Aaron moving about among the seven golden candlesticks of the Christian Church, feeding them with the oil of grace, and causing them to burn with brighter radiance. And as the light of Christ thus shines in the darkness of the Church, so the Church thus enlightened shines in the darkness of the world. "Ye are the light of the world," He said to that inner circle of disciples—the immediate satellites that revolved around Him and bathed in His effulgence. God's people are lights shining in a dark place—lamps in a sepulchre. His servants are stars. The seven stars

which He holds in His right hand are the angels of the Churches. The candlestick and the star are both images of the night. And these two figures may be regarded as emblematic of the two dispensations—the Jewish and the Christian: the candlestick, symbol of an artificial dispensation of types and shadows destined soon to burn out and be extinguished; the star, symbol of eternal realities shining serenely amid the glooms of this world, and destined to shine most brightly when the shadows of all temporal things have passed away. In both cases the light shone, the light shineth in darkness. No other light has a dark, guilty world, but this reflected light from heaven. The Church collectively, and the Church as represented by each believer, is the bearer of Christ's transmitted light, *not in daylight, but in midnight gloom.* Not having light of its own, it is to diffuse through the dense misty atmosphere of sin the blessed light which it receives from Him. It is to dispel the spiritual blindness and gross ignorance of perishing souls, and bring them to the saving knowledge of Christ. What a high and sacred office this is, to hold forth the Word of life to those whom the god of this world hath blinded! How careful should each believer be who has this sacred light entrusted to him, not to hide it under the bushel of busy worldliness, or under the bed of carnal sloth! It may be a mere glowworm spark, but it is inconceivably precious, just because it shineth in darkness. In the daylight other light is not needed, and may therefore be extinguished without loss or regret; but in the night there is nothing to compensate for the loss of any light that is

put out. Suppose you had penetrated into the farthest depths of an intricate many-chambered cavern, far from the light of day, and that all the torches you had brought with you to dispel the gloom had one by one expired, leaving you with only a single torch half-burnt in your hand,—how carefully you would carry it, knowing that upon its continuing to burn and shed its light upon your path, depended your hope of reaching the upper world of light and life. In like manner, every believer in the cave-like darkness in which he dwells, should guard and tend the light that has been given to him by God to be the light of his feet and the lamp of his path, to lead him and all whom he can influence from the outer darkness of the world to the marvellous light of heaven. If the light in thee be dark, how great is the darkness! There are no means to dispel it. In the Church and in the believer the light shineth in darkness; and if it be extinguished, all is lost. It is a total eclipse within and without, a blackness of darkness for ever.

My subject is capable of endless applications. Our eyes see visions when they are shut. The feeling that has withdrawn from the exquisitely sensitive surface of the eye in the blind, is concentrated in the finger tips and in the ear; nay, the whole body becomes one eye; and the air acts in place of the light as a medium of communication with the outer world. Intellectual light shineth in darkness. The mind becomes phosphorescent at night. What was smoke at noon becomes flame at midnight. Passion awakes, and the imagination becomes more vivid and active when the material world is

wrapped in gloom. When the light of perception is extinguished, the light of meditation gleams brighter in the vacant shadow. It is the law of mind that vividness of sensation and clearness of perception exist always in an inverse ratio. Vision, which is the clearest of our modes of objective perception, is ordinarily attended with scarcely any subjective feeling; and hence we shut our eyes when we wish to think clearly and feel strongly; and hence, too, the reason why the darkness appeals so forcibly to the passive sensibility. As Jean Paul says, "The earth is every day overspread with the veil of night, for the same reason that the cages of birds are darkened, so that we may the more readily apprehend the higher harmonies of thought in the hush and stillness of darkness." Then, too, the light of knowledge implies the darkness of ignorance; and the wider the circle of light spreads around us, at just so many more points does it touch the surrounding darkness, so that we are thus constantly taught the limit of our powers, and kept humble and reverential. The light upon the great problems of the soul and of man's destiny which the heathen enjoyed was like the feeble light of a moonless night, when the stars are few and faint. It was a vague, wide, general conjecture, which did not oppress the heart or lie heavy upon the life. It was free from the distressing doubts which in these days constitute the peculiar trial of many of the best and most thoughtful minds. But Christianity, while it has brought life and immortality to light—while it has disclosed to us things which it concerns us most of all to know—has nevertheless filled the

horizon with profounder darkness than before. The foreground is illuminated, but the background is enveloped in deeper mystery. The Word of God is, indeed, the light of our feet and the lamp of our path. But just as a lantern makes the night darker all around, while it casts a strong light upon the objects at our feet, so the Gospel of Christ makes the secret things which belong to the Lord our God more inscrutable—while the things that are revealed and that belong unto us and to our children that we may do all the words of God's law, are rendered plainer and easier of comprehension. It suggests difficulties even by its clearest doctrines, and casts dark shadows of speculation from its brightest revelations of grace and truth. We need to pray, "Send Thy light forth and Thy truth;" for Scripture truth has no significance to us without this heavenly illumination. It is like a dial, with all its divisions and lines perfect, yet revealing nothing of the times and the seasons which God hath kept in His own power, except when the Sun of Righteousness shines upon it, and even by its very shadows brings out light,—enables us to discern the signs of the times, and to know the day of our merciful visitation.

Religious doubt—that is, not a final but a transitional state, not an end but a means; when, as Sir William Hamilton says, "we doubt once in order that we may believe always, renounce authority that we may follow reason, surrender opinion that we may obtain knowledge" —is light shining in darkness—the birth-pangs of clearer light. It is better in one sense, no doubt, to grow in knowledge by quick steady increase of light, without any

intervals of darkness. But most thoughtful men increase in faith and spiritual discernment by often doubting, and by having their doubts cleared up. Religious thought in this way grows into a personal feeling; and the solid rock of truer conviction and deeper trust, as a firm foundation for the soul to build upon for eternity, remains behind after all the abrasion of loose and more perishable materials through speculation. A different if not a truer revelation of heavenly realities is given to us through the dark distressing process of doubting, than through the bright joyful exercise of unhesitating faith; just as our knowledge of the chemistry of the sun and stars, of the physical constitution of distant worlds, is derived not from the bright bands of their spectrum, which reveal only their size and shape, but from Fraunhofer's wonderful lines—those black blank spaces breaking up the spectrum bands—which tell us of rays arrested in their path and prevented from bearing their message to us by particular metallic vapours. Unto the upright, just because of the purity and singleness of their motives and the earnestness of their quest after truth, there ariseth light in the darkness. We must remember that light is *sown* for the righteous; that its more or less rapid germination and development depend upon the nature of the soil on which it falls and the circumstances that influence it; that, like seed, it at first lies concealed in the dark furrow, under the cheerless clod, in the cold ungenial winter; but that even then, while shining in the darkness, while struggling with doubts and difficulties of the mind and heart, it is nevertheless the source

of much comfort, and in its slow quickening and hidden growth the cause of lively hope, and of bright anticipation of that time when it shall blossom and ripen in the summer-time of heaven—shine more and more unto the perfect day.

The light of comfort shines in the darkness of sorrow. To use a homely illustration, a towel when wetted becomes darker than before, but at the same time it becomes more transparent. In quitting one medium for another—the air for water—its power of reflecting light is diminished, but its power of absorbing light is increased, so that the darkness of the towel is due to its increased transparency. This is the case, too, with such minerals as tabasheer and hydrophane, a variety of opal, and also with table-salt and snow, which are opaque when dry, but when immersed in water become transparent. Thus it is with sanctified trial. When passing from the element of joy into the element of sorrow, life is darkened; but it is made more transparent than before. It does not reflect so much gladness, but it allows us to see deeper into its true nature. When deep calleth unto deep, and all God's billows pass over us, our souls may be very gloomy and sad; but we have an inner light, a deeper peace, that clears away all obscurity from our character, and gives distinctness and beauty to our piety. By the gracious compensation of Heaven, the loss of reflection becomes a gain of absorption. The sunshine that we cannot reflect in joy is imbibed into the very being of the soul, and becomes part of its rich Christian store. And thus it is always. God changes

the medium in which we live as our condition requires it, in order that we may have in the one element what we lack in the other—that for self-manifestation we may have self-knowledge, and for the loss of comfort and happiness may have true insight and enlarged experience Now He places us in the air of prosperity, that we may improve its advantages in the way of gratitude to God and beneficence to our fellow-creatures. Anon He pours the floods of adversity over us, in order that our gaze may be turned inwardly upon ourselves, and we may discover our true characters, and see things as they really are in their moral relations. It is the law of celestial optics that, amid the gloom and desolation of earthly scenes, the cross of Christ shall shine forth with new and surpassing glory. It is in the dark valley, and accompanying our friends on the last sad journey, that God shows us the path of life. It is down in the dark grave, where our bereaved hearts lie with them, that we see stars of promise which the noonday of joy hides from others. When a lower light is put out, a higher light appears in the darkness thus created. When the earthly lamp is broken and extinguished, the Sun of Righteousness arises upon us with healing in His wings. When the common daylight of the world fades away, the mystical daylight of other worlds glitters in the twilight sky. To the weary outcast Jacob, the vision of Bethel appears. The light of home had vanished in the blackness of his own base guilt; the light of hope itself had almost expired in the dark consequences of that guilt; the night was his curtain, the earth his bed, and a stone

his pillow; but through his troubled sleep he saw and heard what encouraged him to the last moment of his life. And to every Nathanael whose heart God is purifying by drawing over it the veil of sorrow, it is promised that he shall see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man—ascending with his tears and prayers to the throne of grace, and descending with comforting blessings to his heart—along the new and living way, the golden ladder of Christ's sympathy and sacrifice.

All light shineth in darkness! The one is the complement of the other. There is no light without its sister shadow, and no shadow without its sister light. The visibility of shadow is the evidence of light. Evil is the correlate of good. It needs the darkness of hell to define the outlines of heaven; fear to define hope; disease, health; misery, happiness; guilt, holiness. No physical object, and no moral truth or experience, can have an outline without its corresponding darkness. If seen in its own light, it is all light, and therefore has no precise shape or form. Strange thought, that which darkened the universe contributed most to its light! Sin under the training of the Spirit turns to such regrets and penitences that it becomes an element in the soul's education, through which it struggles to greater purity and sanctity than it could have attained to, untempted and unfallen. All things that seem to be against us, under the transforming influence of grace work together for our good; and Adam's fall is a moral recoil by means of which we rise ultimately to a far better paradise than

that which he lost. In short, no poetry, no art, no philosophy, no religion such as we know it, could exist if the cloud of sorrow, and the shadow of sin, and the night of death were not thrown over the world, if the light did not shine in darkness.

Our great epic poet called night "eldest of things;" and darkness was represented by the ancient poets as the "mother of all things." It is not light first and then darkness; but light comes out of darkness—the morning out of the womb of night. The Bible narrative of the creation opens with the announcement that "darkness was upon the face of the deep"—and the first creative fiat was, "Let there be light;" while the serial creations are described as beginning with darkness and terminating with light; "and the evening and the morning were the first day," &c. Such also is the order of the cosmogony of every nation—the order acknowledged by all the poets. Goethe calls Mephistopheles in Faust, "*Ein Theil der Finsterniss die sich das Licht gebar*"—part of the darkness which brought forth light. And this natural order symbolizes the spiritual order. The night of ignorance precedes the dawn of knowledge; "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." It is at midnight that the song of the angels announcing the Nativity is heard; it is at midnight that the cry announcing the second coming of Jesus startles the darkness. "Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet Him." In the evenings and mornings of the natural creation are pictured the evenings and mornings in the progress of the new creation of God in the soul. What

are all the times and the seasons of earth but watches of the night preceding the everlasting dawn; the evening of earth and the morning of heaven making the one day of eternity. We cannot but believe that the hours which in this shadowy dispensation are marked by the circling of the stars and the opening and closing of the flowers, have something corresponding to them in the world of eternal realities, even although we are told that there shall be no night there; and that the inhabitants need no candle, neither light of the sun. These hours are outward types of inward spiritual states; and therefore the Lord, who is the light of heaven, will reproduce them there. All darkness will vanish, and yet there will be a rainbow round about the Throne, and the brightened memory of earth's gloom will add to the beauty of heaven. The times and the seasons of glory will be caused directly, no more by creature means, but by that Sun that shall no more go down, and that Moon that shall no more withdraw itself; only the sun shall no more light on us, nor any heat, and the darkness of night shall lose all its terror and loneliness, and bring with it only its solemn tenderness and its holy rest.

> "For we have also our evening and our morn.
> * * * * * *
> The face of brightest heaven had changed
> To grateful twilight (for night comes not there
> In darker veil), and roseate hues disposed
> All but the unsleeping eyes of God to rest."

But though the light shineth in darkness, the darkness does not always comprehend it. How little true faith is there on the earth! Where the lamp of knowledge burns most brightly, there the darkness of scepticism is

densest. Those who feel themselves to be, in the beautiful language of the poet, infants crying in the night, infants crying for the light, and with no language but a cry, too frequently are insensible to the little light that does break in upon their sorrow and ignorance. Men of science are satisfied with a blank universal negative instead of religion, are content to live and die in a cold orphaned spiritual darkness, instead of echoing the noble cry of the old heathen hero to the gods, "*En de phaei kai olesson*"—"In light destroy us," willing even to perish, if it were only in light. In how many simple souls the interfering rays of light from different creeds, all professing to come from heaven, destroy each other, and produce an utter blackness of darkness! In how many sensitive minds, as in the negative picture of the photographer, the very lights of truth have left a darkened impression, and become shadows! Multitudes love darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. Spiritual light is to them an ungenial, unwelcome element, as the natural light is to the foul crawling reptiles that hide themselves from the sunshine under stones or rubbish-heaps. And, alas! how numerous are those who have never been taught any portion of the truth about God, and Christ, and heaven, and right and wrong, at all; who have no thought beyond the present world and the needs of earth, and who prove to us by the contrast of the darkness and vileness of their lives what we owe to light and knowledge, how much of God's goodness is wrapped up even in our worldly civilization. The rays of the sun at night pass over our dark heads, and we do not recognize them to be sunshine until we see them

reflected in the face of the moon. So the rays of Christ's glorious light are shining in darkness, passing over the dark ignorant heads of thousands upon thousands, and are only seen to be light and life when reflected back in the faces of the faithful, believing few. The gross darkness of the people comprehends not these heavenly rays; they find nothing in them, no spiritual susceptibility against which to strike back into brightness.

The law of the natural world is here also the law of the spiritual. Natural light requires a *medium*, if it is to have any effect upon the darkness. Those ethereal vibrations that come to us from the sun, can only be diffused with warming and illuminating power when they come into contact with our atmosphere. In the vast spaces beyond, the profound darkness comprehends them not, because they have no atmosphere to reflect them. Were there no atmosphere, the illumination of our earth would be most fragmentary and imperfect, even though the sun shone brightly. No objects would be visible except those on which the solar rays fell directly; and around these brightened surfaces there would be Egyptian darkness. The varied beauty of the landscape would vanish, and the azure tint of the sky would disappear in an inky blackness in which the stars would shine brightly at mid-day. As it is, we see how small is the power of the sun's rays to illumine at great elevations, owing to the rarity of the air. Every traveller is familiar with the peculiar darkness of the noonday sky at lofty elevations on the Alps and Andes. The eye can look on the rayless sun in the deep violet ether without

being dazzled, and the scenery beheld in this nameless, eclipse-like light looks indescribably wild and unearthly. Now, so it is with the True Light of the world. It needs the medium of faith to make it visible to us; it needs the atmosphere of believing, trusting love to make it illumine our souls and fill them with the beauties of holiness. In proportion to the greatness of faith is the illuminating power of this Light. Souls deep down in self-abasement on account of sin may have much light, because they have much faith,—may hear Christ's words, "Great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." While souls exalted to heaven, like Chorazin and Bethsaida, by reason of their privileges, may yet, on account of the absence of faith, be covered with perpetual snow, and overarched with hopeless darkness, cast down into hell. All men have not faith; therefore all men have not light. Let our prayer be, "Lord, increase our faith," that thus we may have a powerful reflecting and refracting medium, by means of which the light that shineth in darkness may be comprehended by our darkness, and may warm and illumine and vivify us more and more. In this dark world of probation let us stretch out the tendrils of our soul's longings and affections towards the bright and the morning Star, let us grow and blossom to the coming dawn. As children of the light, let us walk in the light while we have it—in the light of Christ's Word to direct us, in the light of His example to guide us, in the light of His approving smile to comfort us—until at last, all darkness vanished, all shadows passed away, in His own everlasting light we see light clearly.

A WATERFALL.

'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."—ISAIAH xliii.

BESIDE a lofty waterfall I've stood,
Formed by a torrent from a snowy height,
And gazed far up to where the foaming flood
Burst from the sky-line on my awe-struck sight.

So vast its volume, and so fierce its shock,
No power at first its headlong course might stay;
It seemed as if the everlasting rock
Before its furious onset would give way.

But as it fell, it lingered in mid-air,
And melted into lace-like wreaths of mist,
Decked by the sun with rainbow colours fair,
And swayed by passing breezes as they'd list.

And when at last it reached the dimpled pool,
Hid in its granite basin far below,
Its spray fell softly as the showers that cool
The sultry languor of the summer glow.

The aspen-leaf scarce quivered to its sound,
The bluebell smiled beneath its benison;
And all the verdure of the forest round
A fresher greenness from its baptism won.

So have I watched for coming sorrows dread,
With heavy heart for many a weary day,
Foreboding that the torrent overhead
Would bear me with o'erflowing flood away.

But when the threatened evil came, I found
That God was better than my foolish fears;
The furious flood fell gently to the ground,
And blessed my soul with dew of grateful tears.

God mingles mercy with each judgment stern,—
Brings goodness out of things we evil see;
Then let us from our past experience learn,
That as our day our promised strength shall be

CHAPTER XII.

SEEING AND NOT PERCEIVING.

"That seeing they may see, and not perceive."—MARK iv. 12.

THERE is a small round spot in the human eye, about the twentieth of an inch in diameter, and of a decidedly yellow colour, called, after its discoverer, *the yellow spot of Sömmering.* Situated in the exact optical axis of the eye, and being more transparent than the rest of the retina, it has long been recognized as the seat of most perfect vision in man. Its precise use, however, is still somewhat doubtful. Some eminent physiologists are of opinion that it performs the same part in human vision which a yellow medium performs in photography. It is well known that in the sunshine there are three different constituents—light, heat, and the chemical or actinic rays which produce a photographic image on a prepared surface. A sunbeam passing through a yellow medium transmits its light and heat rays, but its chemical or actinic power is intercepted; so that a room glazed with yellow glass will be flooded with brilliant light and feel oppressively warm, while the

sensitive plate of the photographer, which in other circumstances would blacken at once on the least contact with the sunshine, may be exposed there for weeks without the slightest change. Unless, therefore, the yellow spot of the eye differs from all other transparent yellow media known to us, its use may be to arrest and extinguish the chemical rays of the sunlight, which in all likelihood would prove injurious. We know indeed that even minerals are susceptible of actinic change, and that if the rays of the sun shone uninterruptedly upon a granite pillar or a bronze statue, it would perish under the delicate touch of this most subtle agency, independently of all other influences. It is reasonable, therefore, to suppose that the actinism of the sunlight would produce a destructive effect upon the tender tissues of the retina and the brain behind, if allowed to reach them. Thus, He who has so marvellously constructed the human eye, and adjusted it to the sunlight and the various requirements of man, has put this small yellow spot in its axis, in all probability, that the innocent rays of light and heat may pass through in order to produce vision, but that the destroying chemical rays may be kept out.

Employing this interesting fact in natural history, as an analogy in supernatural history, it may be said that in the spiritual eye there is often a similar yellow spot, which prevents the full influences of spiritual light from reaching the soul. The analogy, however, is not in all respects applicable; for, in the bodily eye, the yellow spot is a wise provision of nature; whereas in the

spiritual eye it is a defect caused by sin. To the bodily eye the ray of natural light which the yellow spot keeps out would be injurious; whereas to the spiritual eye the ray of spiritual light which the yellow spot keeps out would be the most beneficial of all. Still, so far as the one point of its power in excluding a certain constituent of the light is concerned, the yellow spot furnishes a good illustration of what blinds the soul to the truth of God, and in this aspect I shall consider it.

In the sunshine of the heavenly world, just as in the sunshine of the earthly, there are three constituents. Every ray of spiritual light may be said to contain three ingredients—knowledge, emotion, and impression—corresponding to the light, heat, and chemical power of the sunbeam. Faith, which is the vision of the soul, implies three things—intellectual knowledge of the truth, an emotion produced by the truth, and a cordial reception of the truth; or, in simpler words, knowledge, belief, trust. The Apostle sums up these three elements of faith in his address to the Romans: "How, then, shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" It is possible to have one of these elements of faith without the others. A man may be ever learning, and yet never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. He may hear the Gospel, and yet not believe it; he may believe the Gospel, and yet not call upon the name of the Lord. The whole system of Christianity may be comprehended as perfectly as any scheme of science or philosophy, and

yet there may be no actual belief in its divine origin or saving efficacy. In these days of universal inquiry, when scepticism is so prevalent and self-asserting, we see numerous instances of knowledge without belief. For every thoughtful mind there is a deep interest in the mere form, plan, and character of the sacred writings — a literary and intellectual interest; and hence we see scholars studying the Bible as they would do a book of science or philosophy—investigating all its truths and relations on critical and philological grounds, classifying and arranging them, exploring the antiquities of Nineveh and Egypt, and the animal and vegetable productions of Palestine, in order to shed light upon every allusion in it; while all the time the main function of Scripture has been forgotten. It has been regarded as an end, and not as a means, leading to the personal Christ, whom it reveals. What is arrogantly called "the higher criticism" has eliminated from it the whole spiritual element, for the sake of which it exists Everything that appeals to the conscience—the love, the faith, the will of man as a spiritual being—has been excluded by this destructive process, and only that left which appeals to the mere intellect of the natural man. This is a sad state of things; but it is a sadder thing still, in the sight of Heaven, to see men convinced of the divine origin and inspiration of Scripture, acknowledging the importance of those central and eternal verities which are independent of the minuter questions of criticism, deeply impressed with the moral beauty of the Gospel and its fitness for unfolding the spiritual life of man and yet

coming short in their own experience of its great end—neglecting the great salvation which it reveals. There is also a traditionary belief of the Gospel, which may always be expected to prevail in those places where it is preached; and though this can produce nothing but a customary profession, it is too often mistaken for that living faith which changes the heart and sanctifies the life. Very many take it for granted that they believe the Gospel, if they have no better reason than this, that they never called in question the truth of any of its doctrines, and have often been deeply impressed by its beauty and power. Thus men may know the truth, and yet not be savingly affected by it; they may have light without heat and renewing power.

They may go further, and have not only knowledge, but belief of the truth, not only light, but heat; and yet be ignorant of what is the most essential of all, the saving, transforming influence of the truth. The preaching of the Gospel produces a powerful impression upon them. The entrance of the Word not only gives light to the understanding, but creates a glow of emotion within the heart. The judgment is not only convinced, but the feelings are roused. A Felix trembles when a Paul preaches of judgment and eternity; an Agrippa is so deeply moved by the personal appeal of the truth that he is almost persuaded to be a Christian. We have known persons profoundly affected by a sermon upon the Saviour's self-sacrificing love. And yet nothing came of it. All this emotion was worse than wasted; for, failing to produce an abiding change, it petrified the

heart. We attach undue value to mere emotion in religion. We imagine tears to be a proof that the whole nature is stirred to its depths. It may be so, but not necessarily. The rain that falls with a loud noise speedily runs off and disappears; but the snow, that falls silently, remains and accumulates. And so the emotion that is demonstrative quickly vanishes, while the quiet inward sorrow of soul broods over its loss. The sensibilities may be moved while the heart is unchanged, and the inner nature cold as the ice beneath the prismatic hues of the Northern lights. Every observer of human nature has noticed that weak, shallow natures, which are ready to shed tears on the most trifling occasion, are nevertheless often the most stubborn of will and the most callous of heart. And hence the beautiful verisimilitude of the parable that represents the seed sown on stony ground as springing rapidly up and withering as rapidly away.

Thus it will be seen that we may have the two elements of faith, the two constituents of spiritual vision, and yet not have the third and most important of all. We may have the light of knowledge and the heat of emotion, and yet want the actinism or chemical power of the spiritual world. It is by this actinism of faith alone that a deep and lasting impression is produced upon our whole nature. It renews the heart; it transforms the life. It makes us new creatures in Christ. Just as the actinism of the natural sunshine produces a portrait upon the photographer's plate, so does the saving power of faith produce the image of God in the soul.

Beholding His glory as in a glass, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of God. It is for this purpose that the Gospel is preached. Only for the sake of this salvation does the testimony of the Saviour exist. Not merely to create a literary or intellectual interest, or to excite the emotions, were the Sacred Writings given. "These are written," says St. John at the close of his Gospel, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."

When the disciples asked Jesus for an explanation of the parable of the sower, He replied, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables, that seeing they may see and not perceive." Some have supposed from these words, that our Saviour veiled His meaning in the parabolic form for the very purpose of preventing His hearers from understanding it. Each parable was like the pillar of cloud—a light to the disciples, but darkness to others. It is surely unnecessary to say that nothing could have been more opposed to the character and mission of Jesus than such a design. There was no eclecticism, no esoteric mystery in His teaching. He had nothing in common with those philosophers who initiated a favoured few into the secrets of their theories, while the multitude were baffled by the abstruse and mysterious forms in which they were veiled. It was the glory and the grace of His Gospel that to the poor it was preached, that the common

people heard him gladly. Every truth which He proclaimed concerned the whole human race—every human being—more than even daily bread. And, therefore, He spoke in parables for the very purpose of making spiritual truth plainer to the comprehension of the dull and ignorant Galilean peasants. He came down to the level of their own earthly things. He made use of the objects of nature around them, the things of their daily life, to teach them the mysteries of heaven. And when He told them to what the kingdom which He attested by His miracles might be likened, the least they could do was to ask for a solution, to inquire into the nature of the resemblance. The disciples and a few other superior spirits had their curiosity excited by these parables. They felt that there were important truths hidden behind them, and they wished to have light shed on them by Jesus. They had that interest in the things of the kingdom, and that spiritual susceptibility, which were necessary to receive and understand them; and, therefore, Christ said, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom." They obtained a solution, not because they were friends, but because they were inquirers; sight was given to them because they were willing to see. But the rest of the multitude had no such spiritual susceptibility. They went away uninterested and unimpressed. Their dull, carnal minds had not been excited by the parable; they felt no curiosity to know its meaning; they did not come to Jesus to have its spiritual significance explained. And therefore Christ said, "But unto them that are without these things are done in parables, that seeing they

may see and not perceive." The judicial blindness that was inflicted upon them was owing to their own perverseness and unbelief. The kingdom had come to them in a peculiarly interesting pictorial form, had been brought down to the level of the humblest intellect by means of homely and familiar images; and if in this form it failed to produce any impression upon them, their case was hopeless—no abstract teaching would have a chance of succeeding. If they understood not the truth when shining through the transparent medium of earthly things, how could they be expected to understand it when veiled in the exceeding glory of heavenly things? No simpler method of instruction than these illustrations could be devised; and therefore there was no alternative but to leave them as before to their self-chosen blindness and ignorance.

To us, too, Jesus speaks in parables. He condescends to the humblest intellect. It has pleased Him to clothe His Gospel in the simplest form. It is brought near to every man's business, heart, and home. It uses the vocabulary of the field, the market, and the household. It employs every man's occupation—the things that are most familiar and interesting to him—as illustrations of spiritual truth. Why is it, then, that it produces so little impression upon us—that, seeing its all-important truth, we nevertheless do not perceive it? It is not more light, more knowledge that we need. We are in possession of the clearest and fullest information upon everything which it is essential to our spiritual well-being to know. Divine truth shines in every part of the Gospel message with a

brilliancy which at once penetrates and reproves us. The Bible, for the purpose for which it was intended, is the easiest book that ever was written. The way of life has been made so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err therein. The momentous question, "What must I do to be saved?" has been answered once for all in one simple sentence—so simple that nothing but wilful blindness can ever more misunderstand it—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." What is it, then, that prevents us from perceiving when thus seeing we see? What is it that stands in the way of a saving impression being produced upon our souls by the Gospel?

In explaining this strange anomaly, let me revert to the opening illustration. I showed that the yellow spot in the eye, while it lets in the light and heat of the sunshine, keeps out the chemical power which would modify the tissues of the eye and brain. I showed that, in a room glazed with yellow glass, the photographer would get heat and light from the sunshine, but he could not produce a photograph, because yellow glass, while it lets in the light and heat of the sun, keeps out the chemical or actinic ray necessary to produce a portrait. And so it is true of many of us, that while we live in the free light and warmth of the Gospel day, while the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world shines upon and all around us, we are not savingly changed, we are not transformed by the light into the image of God. And the reason of this is that we have a yellow spot in our spiritual eye, and live as it were in a

house of yellow glass. We get the light and heat of the Gospel, but not its renewing power. Our eye is not single, and therefore our whole body is not full of light. The medium in which we live and move and have our being is unfavourable to spiritual impressions, and therefore we are not spiritually impressed.

One of the most effectual preventives of spiritual impressions is *covetousness*, or the *lust of the eye*. The golden atmosphere of the world hinders the soul from perceiving the truths which it sees and knows. A life devoted to the things of time and sense can never comprehend the things of the Spirit, which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which are spiritually discerned. There is a peculiar substance called santonine, formed of the leaves and seeds of several species of Artemisia or wormwood, which produces, when a decoction of it is drunk, the strange phenomenon of coloured vision. All light or white objects are seen of a most brilliant yellow hue. So is it when a man has drunk deep of the world's absinthe cup. He sees everything through a golden medium; there is a yellow spot in his eye, which allows the light of knowledge and the heat of emotion to penetrate, but which completely excludes the saving influences of the Gospel. And of all modes of intercepting the power of divine light, none is so effective, none is so common as this. It is Satan's masterpiece. He makes the heart to go after the things of earth, so that the things unseen have no attraction. "If any man love the world," says the Apostle, "the love of the Father is not in him." You may as soon expect a photographer to take a portrait of

a person in a room glazed with yellow glass, as expect a man who lives in the golden atmosphere of the world, and sees everything through the jaundiced medium of worldliness, to copy the beauty of holiness, to become spiritually minded, and like the divine example placed before him. He may see the divine ideal, but he does not perceive it. It produces no effect upon him. And in the end he loses even his admiration for what is great and good, and becomes as blinded in mind, as he is hardened in heart and sordid in life.

Another yellow spot in the spiritual eye, another yellow medium that allows us to see but not to perceive, is *lust of the flesh*. Worldliness has a tendency to this sin. The result of the old idolatry of graven images was sensual indulgence; and very often still those who begin with the idolatry of the world end with the lust of the flesh. And when this is the case, the transforming and renewing power of Divine light is extinguished. The man who gives himself up to carnal indulgence is incapable of appreciating, even of understanding, the spiritualities of Christianity. His conscience is blunted, so that he ceases to recognize the sinful nature of his habits; his moral sense loses its delicacy; his spiritual eye is unable to discern the true nature of God's requirements. His very body ceases to become the ready instrument of his spirit; its fine harp-strings are unstrung and yield no response to the tuneless soul. Memory is impaired; thought is confused; the mind is listless and languid, and no longer capable of taking a firm hold of an idea, or seeing it in its entirety. He may retain much outward

refinement of manners and even amiability of disposition, but his soul becomes sensual and foul, having no room for the self-surrender of true affection, and the humility of a heavenly mind. If every man has a deity of his own—the shadow projected from his own nature—what is the precise divine representative of his capacity of spiritual appreciation? His god must be like himself—carnal, earthly. If every deviation from right involves a mixture of the atheistic element, his bodily indulgences will produce an atheism proportioned to their degree and extent. There can be no true acknowledgment of God where there is a practical defiance of His laws. The optical law that "the angle of incidence is equal to the angle of reflection, and lies in the same plane," is equally true in the spiritual world. For only as we become like God, do we form right conceptions of His nature. He is to us what we are in ourselves—"upright to the upright, but froward to the froward." Surely there is solemn warning in such considerations as these, against all fleshly lusts—as impairing, if not altogether destroying, spiritual vision, and preventing us from seeing the things that belong to our peace.

Another yellow spot in the spiritual eye—another yellow medium which allows us to see but not to perceive—is *unbelief*. This is one of the most common forms in which "the pride of life" manifests itself. Unbelief does not spring from ignorance, as many suppose. Were ignorance merely the ground of it, then the Gospel explained and understood ought to remove it; but the fact that unbelief prevails where the Gospel has been

thoroughly known from infancy, is a clear proof that something else must be at the root of it. There are truths which are simply intellectual, by which neither our feelings nor our characters are affected; and these truths cannot but be believed as soon as the terms expressive of them are stated and understood. But there are other truths which are moral, which involve our interests, and are intimately connected with our character; and these truths will inevitably be resisted when brought into antagonism with our wishes and the prevailing habit of our nature. Of this last description are the truths of the Gospel to the mind and heart of the sinner. The deep-rooted enmity, the self-righteous pride of the unrenewed nature prevents the cordial reception of them. Their bearings and implications are so exceedingly humbling; their call for the abandonment of beloved lusts is so imperative; their injunctions to practise what is altogether repugnant to the corrupt inclinations of the carnal mind, seem so difficult of performance, that the unbeliever refuses to receive them, listens eagerly to every objection, and shuts his eyes to everything that has a tendency to remove his prejudices. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness." "The heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Such texts as these imply that the truth had to a certain extent impressed those who are spoken

of, for otherwise they could not have been guilty of shutting their eyes and ears, and hardening their hearts against it. Warned by an enlightened conscience of their sinful state, they could not bear to admit the full reality of a truth which imperatively demanded a change of life. We must never forget that knowledge is as necessary to unbelief as it is to faith. There is a kind and degree of knowledge which a man must have before he can actually hate the truth and steel his mind against conviction. A measure of light does at times burst in upon the minds of the unbelieving, but "the pride of life" intercepts and neutralizes it.

Such are the reasons why we see the truth and yet perceive it not. It is because our hearts are not pure, our eyes are not single, our minds are coloured by our prejudices. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, surround us, as it were, with an unfavourable medium, which obstructs the full power of the truth. The "True Light" indeed shines around us; it enlightens our minds, it moves our hearts, but it is shorn of its convincing and converting power by some darling lust, some besetting sin. The god of this world hath blinded us by worldliness, by carnality, by unbelief, lest the full light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ should shine into our hearts, and we should be converted and Christ should heal us.

There is an optical peculiarity called Daltonism or colour-blindness. It is so common that nearly one in twenty have it. It consists in an inability to distinguish colours. Green is confounded with red. Those who suffer

from this defect are unable, so far as the colour is concerned, to distinguish the petals of a rose from its leaves, or the blossom of the scarlet poppy from the unripe corn among which it is growing. The beautiful hues of sunset are a delusion to them; the faces of their friends wear a strange complexion; and the fair aspects of nature appear quite different from what they are to others. And yet the eye of the colour-blind seems the same as an ordinary eye. Its structure and appearance look precisely similar. The peculiarity is almost unknown or unrecognized by those who have it; and being ignorant of its existence themselves, they cannot easily be persuaded to believe it. And so are there not many coming to the Lord's house as His people come, worshipping the Lord as His people worship, making the same profession of religion, and walking in the same ways, and yet who are colour-blind spiritually? The whole economy of redemption, the entire scheme of grace, is to them altogether different from what it is to those who know the power of godliness. The things that are spiritually discerned are to them uninteresting and incomprehensible. The colours of the heavenly landscape are confounded by them, and appear of one uniform dull hue. Christ Himself, who is altogether lovely, has no form or comeliness to them that they should desire Him. While the believer utters his rapturous song, "My beloved is white and ruddy," they say, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" They cannot see the beauties and glories of the world unseen; and in the very midst of them are crying out, "Who will show us any good?"

It is to be feared that the very brightness of Gospel light conceals from many their true character. Living in the full sunlight of grace, they do not realize what manner of persons they are. They are self-righteous, self-confident, and self-satisfied. Associating with God's people, and addressed as such by God's servants, they take for granted that they are truly God's people. They see the faults of others, but they are ignorant of their own; the mote in their brother's eye is patent, but they neglect the beam in their own. Now it happens with such persons when the Word of life comes to them with demonstration of the Spirit and with power, and they are convinced of the error of their ways and led to repentance, as it happens with those who are seen by what is called monochromatic light—that is, light of one colour. Ordinary sunlight contains seven colours, and is polychromatic. But a spirit-lamp burning alcohol saturated with common salt, produces light of one colour, which gives a ghastly hue to the features of the bystanders. We read that this property has been made use of in China for many years as a means of distinguishing persons affected with leprosy. The virus can be thus detected in the blood of a person who has been infected with this dreadful disease only one or two days. "By ordinary daylight it is impossible at this early period to remark any difference between the tint of his skin and that of a person in perfect health; but when the faces of both are lighted up by the flame of a spirit-lamp saturated with salt, whilst the face of the healthy person appears deadly pale, that of the individual affected

with leprosy appears red as fire." Applying this fact to spiritual things, Peter saw his true character in the monochromatic rays that streamed from the True Light when he said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." And the light above the brightness of the noonday sun that, on the road to Damascus, first blinded the self-righteous Pharisee, thinking that he was doing God service when persecuting His Church, and then caused the scales of unbelief to fall from them, so that he saw his true character, was surely monochromatic light. And we too, regarding ourselves in the ordinary daylight of the world, comparing ourselves with others, may have no idea of the leprosy of sin that is working the work of death within us. No symptoms of it may appear to others in our outward conduct, which, as touching the righteousness of the law, may be blameless; we ourselves may be ignorant of its existence. But when we view ourselves in the monochromatic light of God's law—when we are brought into the presence of the Holy One of Israel who cannot look upon sin—then we see how vile and polluted is our own image. We have an awful sense of sin, as something deadly, haunting, indestructible, sitting close to the springs of our personal being; and smiting upon our breasts we cry out, "God be merciful to us sinners."

Beyond the seven bands of colour described by Newton, other coloured rays unknown to him have since been discovered. These rays, called fluorescent rays, are not visible to the human eye, except through the medium of various substances—unless peculiar

conditions are established; but they are probably seen under all circumstances by those animals whose eyes are adjusted, as the eyes of all nocturnal animals are, to admit the rays of least refrangibility, and to vibrate in unison with their vibrations. So is it with God's Word. This spectrum of the Sun of Righteousness has rays beyond those seen by ordinary eyes—which are appreciated only by those who have spiritual vision. All whose spirits are in harmony with the mind of the Spirit see wonderful things out of God's law. So is it also with nature, which is God's Book. It has heavenly hues and deep meanings, which only the educated eye and the sanctified heart can detect. We are surrounded on every side by objects fitted by their very constitution to point us to spiritual realities, but sin has blinded us to their significance; seeing we see and do not perceive them. By neglect and carelessness we have made ourselves unable to discern hundreds of beautiful things, which are well fitted to furnish matter for constant delightful and devotional thought. We see only truths of development and creation in nature, and not those of love and redemption—of moral and spiritual life. The evidences which it affords of God's existence are merely mechanical demonstrations, proofs of design and of skilful workmanship—not symbols of spirit and love—correspondences between the outward and the inward—the fleeting shadow and the eternal substance; consequently our hearts are not touched with reverence, our spirits are not humbled and purified by the vision of God's holiness. He who made

man in the image of God, made earth in the similitude of heaven; and therefore the enlightening of the soul is the apocalypse of nature—the anointing of the eye with spiritual eyesalve is the discovery in whatsoever things are pure and lovely here—the type of brighter things above. Let us seek, then, this true euphrasy—let us train our eye to truth and openness—so that we may behold with open face the "open secret" of the universe; that, since it is the law of Heaven to confer spiritual gifts in the presence of their material representatives—to baptize with water and with the Holy Ghost—to give the blessedness of Divine communion with the bread and wine of the sacrament—we, as Christ's disciples, may have the explanation of His heavenly parable spreading around us, when like Isaac we go out to meditate in the fields, and may hear His voice saying to us, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see!"

ORIZABA.

"In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."—GENESIS xxii. 14.

[In ascending Orizaba, or any other of the giant peaks of the Andes of Quito, the traveller passes successively through all the climates of the earth, the seasons of the year, and the zones of vegetable and animal life. He can see, when he has reached the summit, what is elsewhere spread horizontally over the earth's surface, and over the whole year, vertically represented along the side of the mountain below him; while above him, if he be there over night, he can behold the whole firmament of stars—those of the Northern as well as those of the Southern hemisphere—the Southern Cross and the Magellanic clouds around the Antarctic Pole, and the constellation of the Plough around the Arctic Pole. Such a mountain summit is the watch-tower of creation, from which, with overpowering emotion, the eye may embrace, in one glorious view, the whole universe of things.]

THERE is one spot where man may stand,
And at a single glance
All glories of the sky and land
Behold in rapture's trance.

The heavens unroll their mystic scroll
Of stars above his head;
The Cross and Plough at either pole
Their rays together shed.

All climes of earth beneath his feet
Their varied spectrum show,
From glowing hues of tropic heat
To white of arctic snow.

Ranged down the mountain-side, his eye
All zones of life may trace,
From lichen on the summit high
To palm-tree at the base.

All seasons meet beneath the same
Triumphal arch of blue;
And all earth's charms combine to frame
One picture to his view.

Oh, could we find some central peak,
  High in the world of soul,
From whence the broken views we seek
  Might blend in one great whole;

Where we above all doubt might soar,
  In air as crystal clear,
And every mystery explore,
  And bring all distance near;

And focus in one field of light
  Truth's star-beams scattered wide;
And both the poles of life unite
  Harmonious side by side!

We stand upon a point so low,
  We see of earth and sky
But one small arc; in part we know,
  In part we prophesy.

Along th' horizon's narrow rim
  No opening we discern;
And mists of sense arise to dim
  The wisdom that we learn.

We walk amid the world's vain show,
  To higher glories blind;
The very lights of science throw
  Vague shadows on the mind.

By lines of blackness* we unfold
  The plan of worlds afar;
And darkly through a glass† behold
  The insect and the star.

The smallest moss upon a stone,
  Like "writing on the wall,"
Can only be explained by One,
  Though seen and read by all.

* Fraunhofer's lines in spectrum-analysis.
† Microscope and telescope.

In vain we long for larger views,
  Which loftier heights impart;
The limits of our life refuse
  The wishes of our heart.

Whene'er one mystery is revealed,
  Into the foreground brought,
Another, by its form concealed,
  Starts up to baffle thought.

While here, the wisest sage must live
  By faith and not by sight;
For duty only, Heaven will give
  Enough of guiding light.

But when at last, from life's dark road,
  We climb heaven's heights serene,
All light upon the hill of God
  In God's light shall be seen.

All kingdoms of the truth shall there
  To tearless eyes be shown;
And, dwelling in that purer air,
  We'll know even as we're known.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOSS AND GAIN IN MIRACLES.

"And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."—MATT. IV. 3.

FORMERLY miracles—separated from their doctrinal teaching—were regarded solely as evidences of Christianity; the master proofs of the divinity of Christ. Their evidential character is now, however, admitted to be only part of their significance, not the whole of it. They are found to gain more in the power of convincing us, when they are considered not as mere bulwarks, but as essential parts of Gospel instruction. If the sceptic is ever to be satisfied regarding the reality of the wonderful works which our Saviour performed, I believe it will be, not by the consideration of the abstract question of miracles in relation to natural law or human testimony, but by an attentive and earnest study of the miracles themselves individually and as a whole. Their soberness and grandeur—the laws of harmony, modesty, and physical consistency pervading them—their pure morality and lofty religious teaching — their intimate relations with the scheme of grace—will produce an impression, when investigated in this way, which no

arguments derived from the exact methods of science, and the intense realism of the present day, can remove.

Comparing the miracles of the authentic Gospels with those of legendary lore and of the apocryphal gospels, every candid, unbiassed mind must be struck with the vast difference between them everywhere—in the essential reason, in the inward spirit, in the outward form. The glory of the true comes out in strongest light by contrast with the false. All the apocryphal miracles were assigned to the infancy of Jesus; whereas none of the true miracles were performed until after the baptism of our Lord and His entrance on His public ministry; thus showing the perfect consistency between the development of Him who grew in wisdom and in stature, and the growth of human nature in all its stages—no part of His life being forced and unnatural. Not only are the apocryphal miracles childish and absurd, but they exhibit our Lord as capricious and passionate, causing harm and mischief, indulging in petty contrivances for revenge, utterly at variance with our conceptions of a Divine childhood. They are recorded solely to show the power of Jesus, and to pander to a love of the marvellous, in striking contrast with the actual conduct of Him who never sought this kind of testimony—who said to the multitude, "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe;" and who regarded it as a condescension to obtuse spiritual susceptibilities, when, instead of claiming a spiritual faith and obedience, He had to substitute, "or else believe me for the very works' sake." They have no connection with one another; no harmony as a

whole. They do not illustrate any doctrine; they have no spiritual significance. These remarks apply with even greater force to the later, or ecclesiastical, miracles, with which the hagiology of the Church of Rome abounds. We turn with a blessed sense of relief from the marvellous records of saints, haloed with glory, entering into dark chambers and illuminating them,—of monks hanging in the air in the cloister while they read their breviary, or floating up and down churches like birds,—to the simple yet sublime words which describe the walking of Jesus on the waters, or the glory upon Tabor, or the ascension from the Mount of Olives. We here come out from the dark haunts of superstition to the clear sunshine and the pure air of heaven, and feel that the place on which we stand is holy ground.

The miracle which Satan suggested to our Lord in the wilderness of the temptation belongs to the same class as the apocryphal miracles. It is a type of mere thaumaturgical displays, which are eminently undivine in their nature and prejudicial in their operation. In our short-sighted selfishness we might wish that miracles like these were performed for us daily; that instead of having to work and to wait during long months for the slow processes of nature, we might have the stones converted into bread for us at once. But where would be the gain? How much *beauty* would be thus overpassed and lost to the world! Man does not live by bread alone, but also by beauty. He has a hunger of the soul as well as a hunger of the body. He has spiritual tastes as well as fleshly appetites. The eye longs as much for beauty as the

mouth for food. Nature's beauty is intended—though, alas! it often fails—to lead us up to the beauty of holiness, which is its true objective; to "the King in His beauty," whose image is mirrored in all the works of His hands. Ever in Nature's loveliness there is something that we long to make our own, and yet cannot grasp. It is not merely that it is fleeting, that it perishes with the changes of the seasons. Even in the full meridian of summer's perfection, the deep green languor of the woods, the purple splendour of the sunset hills, the glory of the flowers, mock as it were the longing of the soul to embrace and appropriate the subtle charm. The Greeks of old pictured this unapproachableness of nature's beauty, in the myth of the transformation of Daphne—chased by her lover—into a laurel bush, which he could no longer clasp in his arms. We chase the beauty of Nature, and we find it imprisoned in every tree and flower; and while it attracts, it repels us, and leaves our hearts unsatisfied and craving, just because God meant that the finite should lead to the infinite, that in the sensuous we should see the type of spiritual beauty hidden, and through disappointment at the unreal phantom learn to believe in the Angel whose living loveliness is burning in every bush. For this twofold hunger of man God has made provision in the roundabout way in which our food is prepared for us. The corn that yields bread to nourish our bodies, yields in its gradual growth from the seed, and ripening to the harvest under all the gracious influences of heaven, beauty to delight our hearts and refine our minds—beauty which is a puri-

fying vision of God's character, a ray of the Divine Nature shining through the indications of mere intelligence and capacity which its organization and adaptation of means to an end display. All this beauty would have been obliterated in the conversion of stones into bread. Some whose hearts are callous to such gentle influences, and alive only to utilitarian considerations, might think this no great loss. But those who know and feel the value of beauty in the education of a pure mind, its sanative influence over our bodily organization, and its reaction upon our moral nature, disposing us to deeds of purity and peace,—the earth growing more beautiful as we grow better and wiser, and we growing better and wiser as we learn to see more of the beauty of the world, would regard the destruction of this quality by a miracle as one of the most serious privations.

But besides the loss of natural beauty and all its educative influences, there would be the loss in the miracle of the temptation, of the spiritual lessons connected with the growth of bread in the ordinary way. There is no natural object which from first to last is so intimately associated with the heavenly world as the growth of man's bread. God has given more abundant honour to the corn than to any other plant. It is in the vegetable kingdom what Israel was among the nations—the peculiar, the chosen plant. It is the subject of a covenant between God and man, wherein the present succession of the seasons—of seed-time and harvest, summer and winter—is guaranteed, and God has promised to preserve and provide for the corn so long as man shall faithfully

perform his part in its cultivation. He has ordained that the sceptre of the world should be literally *a straw;* that the great power which should reclaim the wilderness, found empires, build cities, and subdue nations, and upon which the fate and fortunes of mankind in all ages should depend, should be the growth of the corn. It has pleased Him that music, which has soothed or quickened humanity, should trace its origin literally as well as mythically to the Pandean pipe — the humble oaten stem. He has told us in Scripture, and confirmed it in history, that all the glory of man is literally, as well as metaphorically, the flower of grass; that all the wonders of civilization, the arts of life, the refinement of manners, the blessings of social organization, and the securities of settled government, are owing to the cultivation of this grass of the field. He has made the corn the basis of man's home and all its gentle virtues, and the starting-point of man's intellectual and moral progress. Through the cultivation of it God has made him amenable to law, cognizant of moral obligations, capable of receiving and understanding a written Divine revelation, and has endowed him with the power of worshipping and holding communion with his Maker. And as He has made its ultimate product in bread the visible instrumentality by which He most effectively nourishes man's natural body, so in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper He has given it the highest honour, and consecrated it to the most sacred purpose, in making it the symbol of Him whose flesh is meat indeed, and a help to faith in the nourishment of the soul.

Every corn-field is a witness for God. Its visible things are signs of the invisible; its objects of sight are also objects of faith. The kingdom of heaven is indeed literally as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and the seed should spring and grow up—first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. The whole process is a divine parable, a mute gospel from beginning to end. Every stage suggests the most apposite symbols and analogies of truths pertaining to the spiritual world. The seed committed to the earth, and dying there, in order to grow and produce the harvest, is a visible representation of that great mystery of godliness—the necessity of Christ's death, and the necessity of man's self-sacrifice. The different results of God's Word, according to the varying dispositions of the hearers, are interpreted by the various fortunes of the seed in the parable of the sower. By the growth of the tares with the wheat is signified the intermixture of good and bad members in the visible Church, the different uses to which they put the same advantages, and the different fates that await them in the great day of trial. By the seed growing secretly from stage to stage is taught the doctrine that the life of faith is maintained by God, and that as He is the author so He will be the finisher of it. By the reaping of the corn in harvest is symbolized the judgment of the world; and finally, by the germination of the corn in spring is typified to us the grand lesson of the resurrection—that death in the human body, like death in the vegetable seed, is only the highest and essential part of its life pausing awhile that it may

start anew, casting away the form in which it was clothed in order to appear in brighter and nobler lineaments of immortal youth. All these deeply interesting and important spiritual teachings of the corn, and many others, expressed alike in the parables of Scripture and in the metaphors of the Oriental mystics, suggested to meditative minds of every age and country, would be lost to mankind if the stones were converted at once into bread.

But further still, the miracle of the temptation would, if performed, have produced confusion in the affairs of the world, and unsettled men's minds. Suppose a miracle-worker were to appear amongst us, and convert the stones into bread, what would be the effect produced by his presence? Would it not help to develop the very worst features of our nature,—foster an idle, greedy, gambling disposition? The demoralization of a lottery, the disorganization of society caused by the sudden discovery of a rich gold-field in the midst of a populous community, would be nothing to it. The quiet, trustful industries by which daily bread is earned would be universally abandoned; men and women would flock in crowds to the magician, and urge him to action in their behalf by any flattery or honours which could be paid to him. God's ordinary gifts and ordinary methods of supplying human wants, the tedious operations of common labour, would all be despised; prudence and economy would be disregarded; a spirit of selfishness, recklessness, and speculation would be engendered; what was easily got would be speedily wasted. There would be no charity or beneficence; man's expectations and de-

sires would always exceed the most boundless miraculous power, and bitter disappointment would be felt at its going only so far and no farther. In short, no greater curse could be inflicted upon a community, than the presence among them of such a miracle-worker; and every sensible man would earnestly long to be delivered from it.

Yet more, the miracle of the temptation would have left the wilderness a wilderness. It would have wrought no change upon the face of nature. Bread would have been gathered from the earth as the Israelites gathered manna in the desert, without affecting in the least degree the ground upon which it lay. Inorganic matter would have become organic without the agency of that vegetable life whose developments and changes give the principal charm and interest to the material world. Stones would have been at once transformed into bread without the intervention of the corn of wheat, whose germination and growth make the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. It is the law of God's providence that the same process of nature which yields food to man clothes the earth also with verdure. The seed whose ultimate product is bread which strengtheneth man's heart, is endowed, when sown and quickened, with the power of appropriating crude mineral particles, and converting them in its growing tissues into vital elements, bright colours and shapes of beauty; and thus an intimate relation is established with the soil, which converts its barrenness into fertility, and its desolation into life. The green blade which it first puts forth

spreads a rich carpet of verdure over the naked earth; and the different stages of growth add their own peculiar beauties of form and colouring to the landscape, until at last the ripe corn in the ear rolls its golden waves beneath the blue autumnal sky, and is one of the loveliest and most gladdening sights upon which the eye can rest. Besides contributing to the amenity of the earth, it leaves behind it in its decaying stubble the elements of increased fertility in the soil. Thus the growth of the corn adorns the earth while it is going on, enriches the earth when it has served its purpose as man's food, and prepares the world by its labours and its products to be what God intended it to be—a bright green home of abundance and love, the suburb of the celestial city. All this would manifestly have been overstepped and lost, if the miracle of the temptation had been performed. Bread would have been artificially manufactured, not naturally grown; and the wilderness of Adam's fall, which Christ was to restore to more than Edenic fruitfulness, would have been totally unaffected.

Lastly, the miracle of the temptation would have obliterated that wonderful process of mutual adaptation by which the plant and the animal benefit each other. The corn and the vine are sanitary agents in the economy of nature. Every corn-field and vineyard remove from the air a certain quantity of that carbonic acid which is exhaled so abundantly from the lungs of men and animals, and during the combustion and decay of substances; and by absorbing this deadly product and assimilating it in their tissues, and giving off in exchange

oxygen gas, the atmosphere is kept in a pure and healthy state. Every stalk of corn and every vine make themselves felt in the good they do the air—a beautiful return for the benefit they receive from the air. What would be death to us is life to them; they feed upon what we reject as poison, and return it to us as bread and wine; and in the process they help to maintain the atmosphere in a fit condition for our breathing. This striking combination of the functions of one order of living beings with the necessary wants of another, by which the whole world of animated existence is benefited, would have had no place for its exercise if the stones were converted into bread; and no provision would have been made for counteracting the operation of various causes constantly contaminating the atmosphere, which would have gone on to such an extent that life on the earth would soon have been impossible.

Such are some of the most prominent losses involved in miracles of Satan's type. Such would be the effect produced if the conversion of stones at once into bread were to become general. And we must remember that the temptation of Satan was typical. A single exception of that kind to the ordinary plan of God's administration would have been fatal to the whole. Just as, in the sphere of God's commandments, he who offends in one point is guilty of all, because God is the Author of all; so, in nature's economy, the single act of commanding the stones to be made bread would have been a violation of the whole divinely-planned and intimately related scheme. We can see no reason why, if there be one

infringement, there should not be many, and the suggested miracle be the pattern of a general derangement reflecting upon God's all-present wisdom and goodness, and seriously impairing our trust in Him.

To all these objections the miracles of Christ themselves, considered as *mere thaumaturgic displays*, are liable. Nature's beauty is loss in them too. When the bread was multiplied at Capernaum, all the revelations of nature's loveliness—from the sowing in spring to the ingathering in harvest, the graceful form and bright colouring of stem and blade and ear—were at once overstepped. The multitude had the utilitarian result—but not the æsthetic process. They had bread, but not beauty. So also at Cana of Galilee. The living agency of the vine was dispensed with, and the water was at once converted into wine. But how much wonder and loveliness were overpassed by the miracle! The gradual unfolding of the tender greenness and graceful shape of the foliage; the slow disclosure of the hidden sweetness and fragrance of leaf, and blossom, and fruit; the elaboration of the wine, first in the vessels of the yellow stem and branches, and through the intricate cells of the leaves, then through the odorous blossoms, and lastly in the transparent goblets of the golden or purple grapes: all this wonderful series of ever-changing but ever lovely forms and colours, into which the dews and showers of heaven are metamorphosed in their passage into wine in the vineyard, was obliterated. And instead of the long feast of beauty for almost every sense, spread over a whole summer, there were a few firkins of wine, created

at once, to gratify a single sense, during an hour or two's social enjoyment. In the sudden stilling of the tempest on the Lake of Gennesaret, the vistas opened up in the wreathing vapours, the strange effects of light and shade, the dissolving glories of the clouds, the rainbow's pencilled petals of light, the white foam of the billows sinking slowly into blue ripples—all the grandeurs and beauties of sea and sky which are disclosed in the gradual subsidence of a storm in a natural way—were overpassed.

Then, too, the moral lessons which the processes of nature teach were lost in the miracles of Christ. In the multiplication of the loaves and in the changing of the water into wine, the spiritual truths symbolized in the growth of the corn and the unfolding of the vine were a-wanting. The profitable meditations on heavenly things suggested by a walk through a harvest-field or a vineyard, found no place in the suddenness of these wonderful works. Experiences of trust and dependence upon a higher Power, acquired during the continuance and gradual subsidence of a storm, and the discipline of faith and patience which moulds and strengthens the character during the progress of an illness, or in the season of convalescence, were overstepped by the miraculous calming of the tempest, and the miraculous curing of disease. Yet more, the Gospel history plainly reveals to us that the miracles of Christ were regarded by the multitude, and even by the disciples, as the performances of a thaumaturge, and actually produced the undesirable influences of such performances which

I have indicated. The feeding of the five thousand in such an extraordinary manner, unsettled their minds. Looking upon it as a special piece of good fortune, they wished the miracle to be repeated. They greatly preferred to have their hunger satisfied in this convenient manner than by their own toil and industry; and therefore it is recorded that they followed Christ for the sake of the loaves and fishes, and wished to take him by force and make him their king.

If the miracles of Jesus involved these losses, and were liable to these objections, why then, it may well be asked, did He perform them at all? Why did He decline to do the miracle which Satan suggested, and yet afterwards do miracles apparently of a similar nature? In reply to these questions it may be stated that the miracle which Satan suggested would have been a mere thaumaturgic display, a mere juggling with the secret powers of nature. It would have had no moral purpose. It would have given no compensation whatever for the loss incurred in it—revealed no higher moral beauty, taught no nobler spiritual lesson, in return for the beauty and typical significance of the natural process which it would have obliterated. How widely different were the miracles which Christ actually performed! They were like the exceptions in the physical world. Every department of nature contains some exception to the general law by which it is regulated; and each of these exceptions reveals a higher law of beneficence and wisdom than the common order of things. For instance, water, instead of contracting and becoming heavier as it freezes,

on the contrary swells and becomes lighter. Had it been governed by the general law, the layer of ice formed on the surface would immediately sink to the bottom; another layer would form on the top, and in its turn fall to the bottom, and thus the freezing would go on until every lake, and river, and collection of water on the globe would become a solid mass of ice, which no summer's sun could ever thaw. But by the exception to the law the ice expands and floats on the top, and thus preserves the water beneath fluid.* In like manner, the miracles of Christ in their higher sphere, while exceptions to God's ordinary administration, were uniformly charged with some errand of love, some purpose of wisdom and mercy beyond the common course of nature and providence. They more than compensated the losses incurred in them. They were far higher than mere thaumaturgic displays. The mere elements of wonder in them were always absorbed in the loftier and more solemn moral purposes which they served. Nature was set aside that the supernatural might be revealed. The beauty of the veil was drawn up out of sight that the surpassing beauty

* This property, long supposed to be peculiar to water, is found by recent experiment to be shared by bismuth, a substance upon whose expansion in freezing no such vital consequences depend; and hence the above beautiful theory of special design, in connection with the formation of ice, is regarded by some as a mere devout imagination. This result, however, by no means logically follows from the discovery. It renders, indeed, the old phenomenon no longer unique, but it does not lessen its value as a remarkable evidence of divine adaptation of means to ends. Though the property in question in the one case should be comparatively useless, it cannot be inferred that the special use which it serves in the other case was not intended and is a mere coincidence.

of the object which it concealed might be clearly shown. That which was obliterated in what seemed a dead course of things in the corn-field and vineyard, was found in a *living Person.* The attention usually given to the objects of nature, and to the ordinary ways of God's providence, was concentrated in Jesus. The True Vine, by whose living power the water was changed at once into wine, displayed a greater glory in the act than the natural vine in all its long course of development. The True Bread revealed a higher wonder, in multiplying the loaves for the hungry multitude, than the corn exhibits in all its stages of growth, from the sowing to the reaping. The loss of the natural beauty in the miracle—a beauty which is relative, passing and perishing—is truly a great gain when it reveals to us the higher moral beauty of the altogether lovely One—a beauty that is absolute, perfect, and self-sustained; and a finite process of creation may well be obliterated without regret, when in its place we find Him in whom creation and the Creator met in reality, in whom God united and reconciled all things that are in heaven and in earth.

Then, for the loss in Christ's miracles of the spiritual lessons taught by the ripening corn and the growing vine, we have the interpretation and application of these lessons by His living lips. For mute symbols we have articulate words; for the dull unchanging signals of nature, that may be misunderstood, we have our own human language—our own human thoughts and feelings. The miracles of Jesus were not silent wonders, arbitrary works, but acted parables — illustrated and illumined

truths. They were seals of holy doctrines, a representation to dim-sighted mortals of the mysteries of the kingdom in the typical language of external acts. Christ's miracles and parables must be combined, if we would understand the perfection and oneness of their teaching. The True Vine Himself gives us the spiritual teachings of nature which we miss at the marriage-feast at Cana, in the exquisite fifteenth chapter of St. John; and the loss of the analogies of the corn-field at Capernaum was more than compensated by the discourses of wonderful depth and meaning, proclaiming Himself to be the True Bread—to which the feeding of the five thousand was made the introduction. In short, all Christ's miracles were the natural texts of spiritual discourses. They rang, as Foster grandly says, the great bell of the universe, that those who had ears to hear might come and hear the divine sermon that followed.

The undesirable effects of His miracles to which I have alluded, our Lord strove earnestly on every occasion to counteract. So far from seeking to unsettle men's minds by them, His sole object was to lead men through them to the exercise of greater faith and trust in God, and to be more quiet and contented in their usual occupations. So far from desiring to undervalue the common things and the ordinary ways of life, by the display of extraordinary powers, His mighty works were all meant to reflect a heavenly glory upon common laws and everyday affairs. The constancy and uniformity of nature had made men insensible to the ruling providence of God, and Jesus performed miracles to prove to men God's

presence in all things, and to show that the law and Him who works according to the law, by them confounded, are separate and distinct. Familiarity had spread a film of blindness over men's eyes, and our Saviour wrought miracles to act as a sacred euphrasy, and open their sight to the wonders that were always around them. Five thousand men were fed in a miraculous manner, that men might be taught in this striking way the ordinary lesson, that it is God who gives us our daily bread by means of the ordinances of nature and of human society, and in whom we live and move and have our being. The miracle was performed because the circumstances of the case required it. It was no needless, ostentatious display of supernatural power. The wilderness supplied no natural food; and without the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, the impulsive multitude who followed Jesus into it, would have fainted with hunger. He gave thanks to the Father, and blessed the miraculous provision, to show that it came under the same obligations of dependence and gratitude as human nature's daily food. He commanded the disciples to gather up the fragments that nothing might be lost, to guard the disciples against the assumption that they might fairly waste what could be so easily supplied. When He found that the effect produced upon the multitude by the miracle was not that which He desired, He withdrew Himself from them. And afterwards when they discovered Him, He upbraided them for seeking Him, not because they saw the sign of His redemptive work in the miracle, but because their bodily wants were satisfied by it; and exhorted them to

labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life, for the spiritual truth of which the miracle was the mere outward vehicle.

One of the most striking characteristics of the miracles of Jesus, is the fact that they all fell in, by a natural harmony, with that law of man's economy which ordains that in the sweat of his face he shall eat bread—that all blessings shall come from toil and pain. These miracles were not irregular wonders, but Divine aids to human labour—Divine developments and completions of human beginnings. Miracles were performed not without human means, but through them. The miracle of the loaves and fishes was not the creation of new food altogether—of "ambrosial cates," but the multiplication of one poor fisher's rude and scanty store. It did not start from the primary natural source of the corn of wheat, but from the latest artificial result of bread; not from the embryo or roe, but from the full-grown fish caught and conveyed to the spot by the fisherman's toil, and prepared as food by human hands. The miracle of Cana was not the creation of a heavenly beverage unknown to earth, in empty vessels, but the conversion into the common wine of the country—only of better quality—of water which the servants had drawn with toil and trouble. There is nothing in the narrative which supports the common notion, that all the water which was poured into the six jars was turned into wine. Indeed the exact words in the original altogether exclude such an idea. Only as much of the water as was drawn *from* the jars—by the labour of the servants—was changed into wine. And

while this interpretation removes the difficulty which some feel regarding the enormous quantity of liquor supposed to have been manufactured by our Lord, it also confirms, in a striking manner, the truth that it was the results of human toil only which Jesus blessed. It was not till the fourth watch of the night, when the disciples were fairly exhausted with rowing against the tempest, that Jesus came to their aid, subdued the storm and brought the ship immediately to the land whither they went. The miraculous draught of fishes, and the finding of the coin in the fish's mouth, were both direct results of ordinary toil. In the Moabite war, the Jewish army, about to perish with thirst, had to dig ditches in the valley in which they were encamped, at the command of Elisha, ere the Lord, without wind or rain, sent the abundance of water which supplied their wants, and, by the blood-red reflection of the rising sun in its wide expanse, proved the means of destroying the enemy. The widow of Obadiah had to pour a little of the oil, which was her last possession, into each vessel which she borrowed, in order that it might be filled to the brim with the miraculous increase of the Lord. Even in the supreme miracle of raising Lazarus from the grave, the aid of human labour was called in. The bystanders were commanded to roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and to loose Lazarus from the cerements of the tomb, to do all in fact that man could do towards raising the dead. In like manner, it would be easy to show that all the other miracles in the Old and New Testaments, "instead of dispensing with human labour, crowned it

with a blessing which it could not itself work out, that in them human effort not only preceded, but carried to its end the aid of God."

And in this respect how different are the Divine miracles from the marvels recorded in the mythologies and fairy lore of every nation! Aladdin rubs his ring or his lamp, and immediately a magic feast is provided, for which no tiller of the ground toiled in the sweat of his brow; a gorgeous palace is raised at once without the slightest intervention of human labour or skill. Fortunatus puts on his wishing-cap, and immediately all that he fancies is accomplished without any trouble. All these myths are objective expressions of the intense human longing to change stones into bread by the mere exercise of arbitrary power—to realize the ideals of creation without the toil and trouble through which alone they can be wrought out. Men have dreamed fascinating dreams of removing the disabilities and limitations of the world and the evils of life, without sorrow. Poets have pictured earthly paradises, where life would be one long festival,

"Summer isles of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea."

But vain are all such dreams and longings. They are of human, not of Divine origin, and spring from a root of selfishness and not of holiness. They cannot be realized in a fallen world, full of sorrow because full of sin. All blessings in man's economy are got from pains. Happiness is the flower that grows from a thorn of sorrow transformed by man's cultivation. The beautiful myth which placed the golden apples of the Hesperides

in a garden guarded by dragons, is an allegory illustrative of the great human fact, that not till we have slain the dragons of selfishness and sloth can we obtain any of the golden successes of life. Supposing it were possible that we could obtain the objects of our desire without any toil or trouble, we should not enjoy them. To benefit us really, they must be the growths of our own self-denial and labour. And this is the great lesson which the miracles of our Lord, wrought in the manner in which they were, unfolded. They teach us that, in both temporal and spiritual things, we should not so throw ourselves upon the providence or grace of God as to neglect the part we have ourselves to act,—that God crowns every honest and faithful effort of man with success. "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in His ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands; happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee."

But the miracles of our Lord were also wrought as the result of His own toil and sorrow. As they fell in with the ordinary ways of providence in the case of others, so they did in His own case. We are accustomed to think that His mighty works cost Him no exertion, that they were accomplished by a simple exercise of will. But He Himself told the disciples the secret of His wonder-working, when on one occasion they asked Him why they failed in casting out the evil spirit from the demoniacal child. "This kind cometh only by fasting and prayer." They thought that they could have cast him out by a single word, as Satan thought that Christ could command

the stones to be made bread. They mistook both the motive and the means by which miracles were performed. They would have exorcised the evil spirit with as little expenditure of labour and self-denial as possible, and without any regard to the state of the lunatic child, or their own state. They would have given the boon which she craved at once to the Syro-phenician woman, in order to get rid of her importunities. But Jesus showed them that not thus could miracles be performed. Just as in the sphere of mechanics, there must be an equivalent in time or force expended to the amount of work done; if there be a saving of time, there must be a losing of force, and *vice versâ*. The pulley that lifts up the enormous weight, gives an equivalent in loss of time for the gain of power; and so in all the mechanical appliances of man; and so in all the arts and relations of life. There must in every case be loss for gain. In the sweat of a man's face shall he eat bread. By the bruising of his own heel, he shall bruise the many-headed hydra of the world's evil. And the miracles of Christ were no exception to this great law of life. Not by a simple word of arbitrary power did He perform them, but by the power of personal self-denial and painful effort. They were wrought as the result of the closest sympathy with the condition of the sufferer. He paid the full price for them in self-sacrifice. The disciples and the multitude saw the open reward in the glory of the miracle; but they did not see or know the secret prayer, the fasting and fainting, the strong crying and tears alone before God which preceded them. As Jacob wrestled with God at Peniel, in secret

and the unexpected reconciliation with his brother on the morrow was the open reward; as every Christian who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, has the open reward which astonishes every one in the victories and immunities mentioned in the 91st Psalm; so Christ Himself, made in all things like unto His brethren, was enabled to perform His wonderful works as the open result of long, lonely hours of fasting and prayer in the desert and on the mountain.

Scripture more than once lifts the veil and gives us a momentary glimpse of the struggle before the triumph—the loss before the gain—the suffering before the glory. It reveals to us that Jesus was moved with compassion for the multitude when He fed them—for the widow of Nain when He restored her son to life—for the leper when He put forth His hand and touched him and said, "I will, be thou clean,"—while by this contact, He Himself, according to the ceremonial law, became unclean. It tells us that He looked forth on the Pharisees with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts, when He healed the man with the withered hand. He looked up to heaven and sighed, when He said to the deaf and dumb man in Galilee, "Ephphatha; that is, Be opened." Three times we are told that before Lazarus was raised from the dead, Jesus was deeply moved. "He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled;" "He wept." "Jesus again groaning in Himself cometh to the grave." Not by any magical effluence, not by any exercise of arbitrary will, costing Him nothing, did the Lord of Life recall the vanished life to the corpse of His

buried friend. On the contrary, it seems as if the very greatness of the miracle required a correspondingly great expenditure of sorrow and self-conflict. The same thought, too, is suggested by the "loud voice" with which Jesus cried, "Lazarus, come forth." More effort, as it were, was needed to raise him who had been four days in the grave, than was expended in raising the daughter of Jairus, or the widow of Nain's son, who were newly dead—for His summons to them was in a low and gentle voice. When the woman's touch of faith drew healing virtue from Him, He felt the loss—a loss of energy to Him equivalent to the gain of health to her. In short, in every miracle the outward glory was the result of an inward suffering. As St. Matthew says, "When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." His miracles were significantly called "works," and were therefore placed in the same category with man's labours, and subject to the same law. "In sorrow—in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." He bruised the serpent's head through the bruising of His own heel. He won back all that Adam lost, not by His crown of glory, but by His cross of shame—not by separating Himself from the common lot of humanity and falling back upon His power as God, but by making Himself one with us, and thus entering into the fellowship of the penalty which man's sin had entailed.

The miracles of Jesus were not creations out of nothing. He did not manifest Himself in them as a Creator, but as a Redeemer. There is not a single instance of His furnishing a new member when an old one had been lost. All His miracles required a fulcrum—in objects already existing—for their operation. There was a blind eye to open, a withered hand to restore, a dead body to resuscitate, a storm to calm, a meal to multiply. They invariably made use of old materials—raised the former state of things to a grander platform. The works of the devil in man and in nature were to be destroyed, but the fundamental identity of man and nature was to be faithfully preserved. Christ's new creation is just the restoration of God's image in man, and God's goodness in nature. His miracles therefore, as actual parts of the great work of the restitution of all things—beginnings and specimens of that new genesis under which all old things shall pass away and all things become new—were not violations of nature's laws, but deliverances of the original perfection of nature and human nature from the limitations and defilements of sin, from the bondage of corruption under which they groaned. The presence of the Second Adam in our world was just like the presence of the first in the primæval world. The birth of the first Adam was miraculous, and therefore the works which he performed were miraculous, in the sense that they implied the exercise of higher powers than those which were found in nature before. But all that he did, though above nature, was no contradiction of nature—no violation of the system by means of which it had for unnumbered ages

carried on its operations. He as the archetype of all prior forms—the crowning point of the world to which its various changes had reference, and in whom the whole mundane system was, as it were, gathered together into one—gave intelligent meaning and force to the blind order of nature. His mastery over the material things of earth was the mastery of intelligent will and intellectual and moral purpose, and was designed of God to carry out the great end of the world's perfection, towards which all things were working together unintelligently and in a lower sphere from the beginning. And so in a higher degree it was with the Second Adam. His appearance in the world was still more miraculous, and therefore more wonderful works did show themselves by Him. He came to carry on with unfaltering power and unerring wisdom the work of the world's perfection, which man had not only failed to perform, but had marred and degraded by his sin. But even the miracles of the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, though above the nature which had been blighted and impoverished, were not contrary to it. The great miracle of the Incarnation, upon which all our Saviour's miracles hang, was an unmistakeable proof of this; for it was *an incorporation of Deity with the works* of His hands. In the first creation God wrought outside and simply as the Creator of all things, but, in the new creation, God was most intimately associated with His material works. In Christ the union of the Creator with creation was not a mere union of proxy or semblance, but a real union. He was the glorious and perfect Creator and the glorious and perfect

creature, the Son of God and the Son of man, the image of the invisible God and the first-born of every creature. He was before all things, and in Him all things consisted. This Incarnation is a perpetual miracle, for He still wears our human form, and completes our salvation in the very same nature in which He had wrought it out on earth. Nature by this union was perfected and sublimated, not confused and destroyed. And therefore all the miracles of the Incarnation were not contradictions of nature, or confusions of order, or even abnormal or eccentric forms of growth, but, on the contrary, revelations of the true order of nature—manifestations of the true law of life. They were tokens of the presence of One who, in His *person* and *work*, came to fulfil all law—the moral law, written on the tables of stone; and the physical law, written on the materials of which these tables were composed.

Nature is ever witnessing to the beauty and harmony that lie deep down at its heart, to the blessing of "very goodness" bestowed upon it by its Creator. Our Saviour drew the attention of His disciples to this on every suitable occasion, and particularly in those discourses in which He spoke of the lilies, the grass of the field, and the fowls of heaven. Science is revealing year by year to us more and more of this inherent, deep-seated order and loveliness. From these qualities of nature, the signet marks of the Almighty, we derive all our natural theology, our beautiful and interesting arguments from design and from final causes. They have been in a great measure overlaid, concealed, and thwarted in their

manifestations by the presence and pressure of the alien principle of evil. Nature under this hostile principle is striving to develop its ideals of perfection, like a patch of grass in a field striving to grow under a stone. Lift up that stone, and you will find every root, stem, and blade flattened and blanched, dwarfed and distorted, but still endeavouring to preserve the ideal shape. Our Saviour's miracles lifted the curse from nature, let in heaven's sunshine upon its pale and crushed forms, and allowed them to develop themselves freely, and fulfil their purposes fully. They brought order out of confusion, light out of darkness, health out of disease, calm out of storm, abundance out of poverty, life out of death; and thus we perceive their true harmony with God's scheme of grace to man, with the purpose of the laws and covenants of the Old Testament, and the precepts and principles of the New. Thus we perceive their true harmony also with the purpose and design of God in the creation, and with the development of nature; which lies not in a downward course of disorder and degradation, but in an upward course of greater beauty and brighter glory. As the process of crystallization, by which the amorphous mineral mass is changed into the diamond or the ruby, testifies to no new law, to no broken order, but is a manifestation of the underlying harmony and beauty of matter, so the miracles of Christ are crystallizations, most lovely and most rare, of the world's chaos of disorder and sin. As the face of nature speaks of no interruption or violation of its laws, but simply manifests its real nature, when its winter sterility breaks out into the glory of April flowers,

so the miracles of Christ are the first pure and lovely flowers of the spring of grace, testifying to the power of the Sun of Righteousness that will go on to develop the true life of earth and the true life of man, and make the winter wilderness a summer garden of the Lord.

The miracles of Jesus, I have said, were the beginnings of a new and higher order of things. They inaugurated the new creation of redemption; and therefore, like the almighty acts of the first six days of the world, they cannot be repeated or imitated. But as acts of the new creation, we can go on working and developing in the nobler course they have indicated. As beginnings of a new order of things, we can act in harmony with the higher laws which they reveal. We cannot create, but we can work with the materials which have been prepared for us. We cannot begin, but we can carry on what has been begun. We cannot change water into wine or multiply loaves and fishes, but these miracles indicate that the Divine energy displayed in them is still working mightily although silently in us, both to will and to do of His good pleasure. They show to us the reality of His conquest over the limitations of the world; they prove that all the prophecies which describe the future palingenesis are possibilities; they supply the link that connects the weakness of man with the strength of God. By the union of the Divine and human nature in Christ, He was enabled to perform His wonderful works; and by faith in Him, union with Him, we, too, can have the Godhead united with our humanity; and, through Christ strengthening us, do all things It is a grand thought

suggested by a modern writer, that all the results of our wonderful civilization have been the *extensive* carrying out of what Jesus wrought *intensively*. He wound up, as it were, in His miracles the spring of the machinery of the world's destiny; and all the progress of the world since has been the working down of this concentrated force. He multiplied bread in connection with the people following Him into the wilderness to hear His words, that through the cultivation of man's spirit by Christianity the waste places of the earth might also be cultivated, and famine be unknown; that the earth might yield her increase, when all the people should praise the Lord. He healed the sick, that "in the reverence for man's body which the Gospel teaches—in the sympathy for all forms of suffering which flows out of it—in the sure advance of all worthier science which it implies and ensures—in and by aid of all this, these miraculous cures might unfold themselves into the whole art of Christian medicine, into all the alleviations and removals of pain and disease which are so rare in heathen and so frequent in Christian lands." He stilled the storm and walked upon the sea that, in the calm courage and skill which the religion of Jesus inspires, man's spirit might have the lordship of the winds and waves, and Christian nations might build their noble fleets and guide them over the trackless ocean, and spread the blessings of Christian civilization over the whole earth. Once, the Bible tells us, the Holy Land was plastic to man's will. All nature there was obedient to the people who were obedient to God. Its rain and dew, the setting of its sun, the flow of its waters, the

increase of its harvests, were all dependent upon the faith of Israel. And this state of things, the miracles of Jesus teach us, was not unique, but representative. The miracle without will still rise to meet faith—the miracle within. Nature still will manifest her sympathy with grace. All things will be possible to him that believeth. And it needs only that the people should be all righteous to give to man that dominion over the whole earth which Israel possessed over its ancient heritage.

CHAPTER XIV.

REJUVENESCENCE.

"Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."—PSALM ciii. 5.

EVER since our first parents were banished from the Tree of Life, by whose blessed medicine they were kept in undecayed vigour, mankind have sought a substitute for it in ways of their own. In Greek mythology we read the story of Medea, who, by the magic of her incantations, restored the aged to the bloom of youthful beauty. In Eastern fables we are charmed with descriptions of the Vijara Nadi, the *ageless river*, which makes the old young again by only seeing it; and of the spring of immortality flowing in caverns below the earth, and guarded by the pundit Kabib, where the bodies of those who bathe in it shine as if anointed with oil, and are fragrant as with the scent of violets. The South Sea islander, seeing the sun sinking, dim and weary, in the western waves, and rising again from the eastern main fresh and bright, conceived the beautiful myth of "the

water of enduring life," which removes all deformity and decrepitude from those who plunge beneath its silvery surface. Among the Aleutian islanders the legend is current that in the early ages of the world men were immortal, and when they grew old had but to spring from a high mountain into a lake, whence they came forth in renewed youth. In the Mediæval romances we are familiar with the "Fountain of Youth," and with the wanderings of pilgrims in search of its miraculously-healing waters—wonderful and adventurous as those in quest of the Sangreal, or the treasure hid at the foot of the rainbow. In Holy Writ the scene of one of the most striking of our Saviour's miracles was laid beside the Pool of Bethesda, in whose porches lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, and withered, waiting for the moving of the waters. "For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." By aid of the "philosopher's stone" and the "elixir vitæ" the alchemists and physicians of the Middle Ages sought to ward off the infirmities of old age, and to restore the freshness and fairness of youth. Nor has this fond dream of humanity altogether vanished in our more prosaic days. There is still the same deep-felt and wide-spread desire to preserve and restore the bloom and vigour of life's early years; and in spite of all our scientific culture and material pursuits, in not a few instances, the charms and potions of superstitious ages are still used for this purpose.

Rejuvenescence is the one great poetic idea of the universe. It underlies all the processes of nature ; it is the end and mode of all its operations. All the phenomena of the spiritual and material worlds are illustrations of it. Nature, as its name signifies, is always about to be born ; always going back from maturity to the natal state, from the end to the beginning, ever renewing its youth with the process of the suns. The dream of humanity is the fact of creation ; the longings that in the human world have been expressed in myths and romances have been symbolized in the objects of nature, in the epic poem of the seasons and the ages. Geology is the history of rejuvenescence on our earth. It shows to us how, throughout its time-worlds, the old has given place to the new, and out of former combinations new ones have arisen. It reveals to us continual disintegration counterbalanced by continual construction ; decay everywhere followed by renewal ; so that all things have continued as they were from the beginning, and the earth looks as young to-day as it did on the first morning of creation.

The surface of the earth has been elevated, by successive stages, from a primitive state of chaos to the present arrangement of sea and land. Again and again it sank beneath the ocean, to emerge after a time quickened into a new life—born again, remodelled. Exhausted by bearing countless generations of plants and animals, it recovered its fertilizing principles under the baptism of the great waters, and became fit for bearing new orders of life when the sea changed its bed. Continents and

islands arose out of the sea, young and full of vigour; they became clothed with animal and plant life; they grew in beauty and luxuriance; they did their appointed work—matured and died, as it were: and the great tidal wave which overwhelmed them exposed virgin lands prepared for the production of new races, destined to go through the same process of growth and decay. By this grand method of cyclical rotation, Nature secured in the wide field of the globe the same beneficial results which the Nile annually produces by its ebb and flow over Egypt; and which the farmer obtains on his glebe by allowing the land to lie fallow, and shifting his crop from field to field. In this way also, by the alternate action of igneous and aqueous forces, the globe was articulated into its present shape, and developed the highly-organized continent of Europe, so admirably fitted by its physical construction to be the home of the foremost race of mankind. And as a plant lengthens its stem, and repeats its foliage more abundantly and luxuriantly year after year, until at last it bursts into flower, so Nature, in carrying out her grand scheme of organic evolution, introduced new races of plants and animals, of a higher and yet higher order, corresponding to the progress of the cosmical changes; until in the end the animal kingdom produced the bee and cow, and made the land to flow with milk and honey, and the vegetable kingdom blossomed into the rose and the lily, filling all the air with the beauty and fragrance of Eden.

The history of the earth as a whole is repeated by each of its component parts. Fragments of limestone

rocks on mountain summits mimic in a remarkable manner the cliffs out of which they have been weathered. Mr. Whymper, for instance, found the piece of mica-schist which he broke from the loftiest point of the Matterhorn, an exact miniature of the whole peak; the same atmospheric causes which sculptured the huge homogeneous mass having at the same time shaped each of its parts. The changes through which each plant and animal passes in its embryonic development are similar to those through which the whole earth and its inhabitants have passed in the course of its geological history. All organic beings begin existence at the bottom of the scale, and, taking on one type of life after another, finally assume the parent type. The perfect state of one organism is but the embryonic condition of another; the highest forms being the sum of all the lower series. The body of the mammal is the archetype of all the inferior animals down to the monad, and is in itself a representation of the whole animal kingdom. The oak-tree exhibits all the grand peculiarities of structure upon which the classification of plants is founded. Its wood is exogenous, growing from within outwards; its bark is endogenous, growing from without inwards, which is the reason of its rugged and withered appearance; while its roots are acrogenous, growing at their extremities. Thus all the distinctive features of the vegetable kingdom are embraced in the oak. The larva of a caterpillar may be considered as an independently existing embryo, which nourishes itself instead of being fed by its mother, and

undergoes, in its progress towards the butterfly state, transformations externally before our eyes, similar to those which in other creatures are accomplished unseen within the maternal organism. Applying the analogy to the whole world of life, it may be said that Nature exhibits externally before our eyes the gradual development within her womb of the vegetable and animal kingdoms as an organic whole, by the introduction of successive animal and vegetable species. These various forms, however, are distinct beings; not the same beings in different stages of growth, as in the case of the insect. The link by which they are united is not the consequence of direct lineage or parental descent—not founded in the laws of reproduction, but in the councils of the Almighty, carrying out a great work of art conceived in eternity and elaborated throughout all time. Nature renews her youth, not by the extensive and varied development of one and the same primeval form, but by the introduction in full perfection of new forms, which will sooner part with their life than with their specific character. I believe that Nature has progressed in time as she progresses in space. In passing from the summit to the base of a tropical mountain, or from the poles to the equator, we pass from one geographical flora and fauna, from one species to another, but we observe no genetic connection between them; so in passing from the oldest geological to the present fauna and flora we pass from one set of species to another; but the change has been effected, not by transmutation, but by substitution.

The cell is the organic atom, the basis of all life. It

is the epitome of the great globe, a miniature world having its summer and winter, its day and night, its life, death, and renewal; mimicking in its changes and processes those of the vast sphere in which it is included. Into this little world, however, the senses of man cannot enter. How the grain of sand becomes a cell we cannot comprehend. The construction of the first rounded bridge between the dead, inert world and the world of life is one of the profoundest mysteries of creation. It is capable of an independent existence, as in the red-snow plant, which performs within itself the whole series of vital functions, running through its entire vegetative development in a single cell. The rejuvenescence of this cell consists first in the decay and reconstruction of its walls and contents in the process of growth; and then in its multiplication by self-division. All the immense variety of forms, colours, and conditions in the vegetable kingdom result from the combination of cells; and hence the phenomena of growth in the higher plants, which consist in the changes and multiplication of individual cells, are all phenomena of rejuvenescence. The individual cells interwoven in the totality of the organism of the higher plants lead the same kind of life there, undergo the same transformation and renovation, as when forming isolated unicellular plants. In the tree the cells, as soon as produced, die and give birth to others; but they do not decay and disappear into gases and mineral substances. They are enclosed in the tissues of the new cells, and thus preserved from the weather, which would otherwise decompose them. They

afford soil and mechanical support to the new cells. The new cells in their turn give birth to other cells, and in their turn die; and their offspring encloses them again in their protective mantle. And thus the growing tree goes on and stops, grows old and becomes young again, ends and begins, until it has reached its highest ideal of form and its longest term of existence. It is built up by a constant process of interstitional rejuvenescence. In the annual plant, when the seed is produced, the multiplication of cells ceases, and the plant dies; but it rejuvenizes itself by the seed which it sheds producing the plant anew. In the perennial plant, the multiplication of cells ceases each year with the formation of the bud; but the cells already formed have a more enduring subsistence, and therefore afford soil and mechanical support to the new growth of the bud. The growth of the annual plant is thus from the seed to the seed again; and of the perennial plant from the bud to the bud again.

Every spring there is a rejuvenescence of the vegetable kingdom. But although most apparent at this season,—showing itself in the tender verdure of green grass, and fresh beauty of bright leaves and blossoms,—it is not the work altogether of spring. This magic clothing of dead boughs with foliage, and bare earth with grassy carpets, is not the result of the few sunny days of April in which it comes so suddenly into view. The labour of renovation begins at an earlier period; and the breath of spring only unfolds that which was preparing in silence and secrecy during the dark chill season of

winter. For, as Dr. Braun * says, in proportion as the vegetable world advances in summer and autumn, in shoot and leaf and wood, in flower and fruit, and all the outward manifestations of life, so does it simultaneously retreat into itself in the formation of buds and seed, to prepare the germs of new life. Thus in August we find in the terminal and lateral buds of the oak the rudiments of the leaves destined for next summer; in the twin terminal buds of the lilac, not only these, but also the rich thyrse of blossom for the future year; and, strangest of all, in the adder's-tongue, a fern which unfolds annually only one leaf and spike, the bud hidden underground in May contains not only the leaf and spike for the next season, but also the rudiments of the leaf and spike for the season after that. Winter puts plants into the deep sleep which allows this rib to be taken out of their side. It prepares for the rejuvenescence of spring. Nature then withdraws into her recesses, and fashions indoors as it were, in the hiding-places of her power, the leaf and the blossom, which come out when the summer shines. Nature looks dead in winter because her life is gathered into her heart. She withers the plant down to the root that she may grow it up again fairer and stronger. She calls her family together within her inmost home to prepare them for being scattered abroad upon the face of the earth. And it is curious to notice that the colouring of spring is like the colouring of autumn. The first sprout of the hawthorn-hedge is of

* See Dr. Braun's admirable "Verjüngung der Pflanzen," translated for the Ray Society by the late Professor Henfrey.

the same reddish hue as the last withered leaf that clings to the oldest branch. In a rich glossy olive hue the ash-tree unfolds its young foliage in April, and sheds its aged foliage in September. The autumnal tints of the oak are prefigured by those of its vernal promise; its leaves come in and go out in a crimson blaze. As Nature begins, so she ends; her extremes meet. Each birth is a prophecy of death, and each death a prophecy of birth.

The illustrations of rejuvenescence which zoology affords are still more interesting, because connected with a more complex organization and a higher function of life. Animal growth differs very widely from vegetable growth. The vegetable grows by means of additional cells; the animal by means of substituted cells. The cells of the plant die as soon as they are produced and have served their purpose, but they are retained in the structure and help to build it up; there being no provision made in the economy of the plant for the expulsion of dead cells. The cells of the animal on the other hand also die, but they are expelled from the body, and new ones take their place. The new cells of the vegetable are added to the dead cells; and living and dead cells together make up the plant. A tree, for instance, has only one generation of living plants on it, but as many generations of dead built up in it as the tree is old. Only each year's growth is living; the rest is all dead heart-wood, which would decay, were it not that it is protected from the weather by the living tissue outside. On the other hand, the new cells of the

animal structure are not added to, but substituted for, the old, which are consequently eliminated from the body. The sap of the plant is employed to add new tissues to the structure; the circulation of the blood in the animal is employed in repairing the old tissues. It may be said, indeed, that in the young growing animal, there is a combination of the two modes of growth. By the animal mode it retains the stability of its system; its body coming back at the end of twenty-four hours to the same condition from which it started, and all the old cells being transformed into new cells. By the vegetable mode of growth, it accumulates that small variation and sum of uncompensated forces, which constitute the growth and progressive development of its body; new cells being added to the old. Every movement of the animal's body is caused by the destruction of so much vital tissue. This effete substance is removed in breathing, and in the various excretions of the body; while the circulation of the blood is continually repairing the waste. The animal thus grows and maintains its stability by a constant process of rejuvenescence. In youth the restorative process outruns the destructive, new cells are added to the old, and the animal consequently grows after the manner of a vegetable; in maturity the constructive and destructive forces are equally balanced, and new cells are substituted for the old, according to the distinctively animal type; while in old age the destructive process outruns the restorative, and the animal consequently decays and finally dies, approximating to the type of the mineral which is disintegrated by the weather.

But besides this continual molecular change which takes place in the animal body, there are certain great changes occurring in it which are conspicuous to the eye, and which are also changes of rejuvenescence, corresponding to the vernal changes of plants. Many animals have periodical and most curious replacements of entire organs and parts of their structure. Every one is familiar with the process of moulting in birds, in which the old feathers drop off every year and new ones are formed; this change in the plumage being accompanied by corresponding constitutional changes. It is an ancient fable that the eagle is able to renew his youth when very old, and poetical allusion is made to it in the 103rd Psalm; but this idea is doubtless founded in reality on the great longevity of the bird, and its power, in common with other birds, of moulting its plumage periodically, and so increasing its strength and activity. Lizards, serpents, and spiders statedly cast their entire skin, and are furnished with a new one. The crab even replaces its stomach, forming a new one every year and casting away the old one. Just as plants rejuvenize by the annual renewal of their leaves and flowers, so animals rejuvenize by the annual renewal of some of their parts or organs. Perhaps the most striking illustration of rejuvenescence in the animal kingdom is the transformation of the sluggish crawling caterpillar into the active-winged butterfly, and of the headless and footless maggot into the highly articulated fly. The winged state of the insect is analogous to the efflorescence of the plant. The butterfly is just the blossom of the caterpillar. For as

the blossom of the plant is formed for the purpose of producing the seed by which the species is perpetuated; so the butterfly is developed by the caterpillar in order to lay eggs and produce future caterpillars; this being its only occupation, many kinds having no mouth to eat. And it is curious to notice how closely nature followed the type of a papilionaceous plant in making the insect. As the butterfly corresponds to the flower, so does the caterpillar correspond to the pod, and the chrysalis to the stem, from which comes forth again the flower. Blossom and pod and stem are thus for ever put forth in succession by the living flower. No less striking is the vernal rejuvenescence of birds, in harmony with that of nature around them. Their richer plumage answers to the beauty of the spring buds; and their sweeter song to the fragrance of the blossoms. And as the purpose of the flower is to produce seed, and of the bird to produce young, and thus in both cases to rejuvenize the species; so in this design they prefigure the beauties and sanctities of human love in its bridal spring. The final metamorphosis which man undergoes at the period of puberty, with its new physical and psychical endowments, corresponds to the passage of insects to the perfect or imago state, and the spring rejuvenescence of birds.

"In the spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's breast;
In the spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another crest;
In the spring a livelier iris changes on the burnished dove;
In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love."

In all the phenomena of rejuvenescence, there is a depression of life preceding the new upraising. The song

of the blackbird and thrush, and the bright crimson of the robin's breast in spring, were preceded by the long silence and the dull russet hues of winter. The new growth of perennial plants commences with bud-scales, which are leaves of the lowest formation; and the new growth of annual plants, with cotyledon leaves, also of the most primitive construction. These transition or lowest leaves in dicotyledons are parallel-veined like the perfect leaves of the monocotyledons; while the leaves belonging to the most advanced structure of the inflorescence come back in typical character to the cotyledons and bud-scales of the earliest formation. The germander speedwell of our waysides droops its erect shoots after flowering, and strikes root in the earth, to be renewed again in the following year and bear flowering branches. The wood anemone prolongs for several years its creeping subterraneous growth, putting forth alternately leaves of the lowest and leaves of the highest type, before it rises into an upright stem, producing the well-known three-leaved whorl of perfect foliage and the beautiful drooping flower. Our native orchids by the yearly decay of one of their two bulbs form a fresh one on the opposite side, and thus the flower marches slowly onwards in the meadow. The blossom of the lily springs from a sheath or leaf of the lowest type. The plant contracts in the seed that it may arise in the stem, and again contracts in the calyx that it may expand in the blossom and fruit. The silkworm moth comes out of the cocoon which was produced by the decomposition or retrograde action of its own tissues

in the caterpillar state. By all these depressions or recoils of life, an impulse is communicated by which the organism attains a more elevated grade. The force necessary for organization is the result of disorganization; and death and destruction are the necessary conditions of life and development.

Passing on to man, who sums up in himself all animal and vegetable types of structure and function, and connects them with the spiritual world, whose existence is the aim to which the infinite rejuvenescences throughout all nature strive, we find that his body is subject to the same laws of growth which rule in the bodies of other animals. He, too, grows by the substitution of new particles for the old. So thorough and complete is this change, that in the course of seven years it amounts to the entire renewal of the whole body. The body becomes young again every day and hour by the molecular change of its substance through the disintegration of work and the repair of food. It becomes young again once every seven years by the entire renovation of all its materials. But besides this particular and general molecular renovation, there are also periodical renewals of some organ or conspicuous portion of the body itself. The body renews its youth through fever, producing new hair and new skin, and becoming stronger and healthier afterwards. Occasionally an old man or woman resumes the external signs of youth. There are numerous authentic instances on record of the cutting of new teeth, of the growth of hair, of a return of the power of suck ling in extreme old age. Scripture informs us that issue

was born to Abraham and Sarah, though Abraham said in his heart, when the angel told him of the predicted birth, "Shall a child be born to him that is an hundred years old; and shall Sarah that is ninety years old bear?" The parents of John the Baptist were both aged; and when the angel announced the birth, Zacharias said, "Whereby shall I know this, for my wife is well-stricken in years?" Indeed, such examples of rejuvenescence in old age are so numerous that they have been systematized into a distinct department of physiology.*

Sleep is one of the most wonderful phenomena of rejuvenescence. It is through sleep that worn-out nature is recruited and renews its youth. As the French proverb says: "He who sleeps, eats." Our bodies return in sleep every night to the ante-natal state, in order that our exhausted energies may be concentrated and refreshed, and, obtaining a new draught from the great Source of all life, we may issue every day from the womb of the morning new creatures. We sink to a lower condition of development analogous to that of the vegetable, that we may rise to a more perfect animal condition than before. The inner formative processes do not rest during this depression and retreat, but rather act the more vigorously, as they do in the plant, because of the absence of all the distractions and interferences of self-consciousness. So, too, the mind in sleep relaxes its hold of the outward world, and becomes a mere passive mirror to reflect its images and sensations in dreams;

* See "Ueber Viriliscenz und Rejuvenescenz thierischer Körper," by Dr. Mehliss of Leipsic.

but in this state of passivity it gathers itself into new force—into a renewed recollection of its specific purpose—and rearranges in an orderly manner all the confusions and perplexities of its waking state. Hence the prudent maxim which enjoins us to sleep over some important step or question is founded not only upon outward experience of life, but also upon inward physiological reasons. Innumerable instances might be quoted in which problems insoluble before going to bed had been clearly wrought out by the mind during sleep; and the result written down by the unconscious somnambulist has astonished him next morning. It is also through the soft soothing sleep which occurs at the crisis of severe diseases that the rejuvenescence of the body occurs. "If he sleep, he shall do well," said the disciples regarding Lazarus. The patient falls into the same state as the caterpillar when it prepares the rejuvenized body for its future resurrection into the butterfly. In this pupa-sleep—this chrysalis state as it were—all his exhausted energies are gathered in and restored, and he afterwards emerges into a freer and more mobile existence. But there is one organ of the body which seems never to sleep, and yet wastes itself by its action, and needs to be repaired. How is the heart rejuvenized? We explain the secret of its apparently unceasing exercise of power by referring to its action of systole and diastole, its exact rhythm of alternating contractions and dilatations. Every contraction by which it forces blood into the vessels is succeeded by an interval of rest of precisely the same length; and during this period of sleep, brief

as it is, the changes that occurred during the contraction are repaired, and it becomes a new heart.

One day is an epitome of life's long day of threescore years and ten. We pass every day through all the changes of human experience. We are children in the morning, with their fresh young bodies and feelings; we are middle-aged at noon, having seen an end of all perfection; we are old and weary and worn out at night. So, too, every human being is a miniature of mankind; for just as we find the child, and the grown-up man, and the aged person side by side in the same family and society, so in the corporate structure of the individual we find that youth and old age are not separate and successive periods, but contemporaneous. All seasons with their corresponding changes on the broad scale of the world are synchronous; so all ages are synchronous on the broad scale of society, and in the microcosm of the individual. Throughout life the phenomena of youth and age run side by side in the same person. If decay attends upon age, so does it attend upon youth; and if youth is a beginning, so, too, is maturity. Many organs have already become old, and lost their vitality before birth. The child has old teeth—the milk-teeth destined to early destruction; and young teeth—wisdom-teeth—appear at a later age. The cotyledon and radical leaves of plants wither away through age when the flowers are yet in the bud, and the blossom becomes old and decays when the fruit merely begins to form. The body of man may be old, while his mind is merely in its first stage of development. Indeed, so closely are youth and age inter-

mingled in the same organism, that one of the most difficult problems of physiology, as Dr. Braun has suggested, is just this—"How are youth and age to be distinguished? When does youth cease and age begin? How do they pass into one another? and which is the more perfect condition of life?"

The mind rejuvenizes itself as well as the body. "It is the youngest and yet the oldest existence in nature, destined to attain in its last age its eternal youth—the freedom fitted to its essential nature." The heir of all the ages, all the elder things, shall indeed serve this younger. It is continually renewing itself in the originalities of genius—in the resuscitations of intellectual life from its stereotyped monotony—in the invention of new methods of inquiry. The so-called heresies of science, art, and literature, are in reality the rejuvenescence of mind seeking a new expression for its new life. Poetry keeps the mind ever young, brings it back from the irksomeness of exhausted human invention to the fresh freedom and beautiful simplicity of nature. The poetical mind ever and anon touches its native earth, and rebounds strengthened and ennobled. Every new thought we acquire—every mastery we gain over truth—is a renewal of our minds. So, too, with our hearts! Scripture speaks of a new heart, and we all know what is meant by the youth of the heart, which may exist even in extreme old age. One of the sweetest promises connected with the "times of restitution," is that the child shall die an hundred years old. To have the child-heart amid the cares and sorrows of life, and the

infirmities of old age—to have the same freshness and elasticity of feeling, the same trustfulness of disposition and magic power to extract an all-sufficing happiness from the simplest things, which so peculiarly belong to childhood—to have them perpetuated and unimpaired amid the changes of the years, who would not wish for such a gift? It may be said that the old myth of transmigration, of successive avatars, is true of our hearts, for they pass through many lives, each with its own opportunity of acquiring some new good, and casting away the slough of some old evil. Whenever we return from selfishness and worldliness to the tenderness and self-forgetfulness of love; whenever a new and noble emotion takes possession of us; whenever the pressure of a sore trial passes away, or we are lifted by faith and hope above it: in these experiences the heart renews its youth. We go back to the freshness and fairness of life's early days, and in the green pastures, and beside the still waters—upon which the valley of the shadow of death through which we have passed has opened—our souls are restored, and we find the crocus of spring blooming again in our happy autumn fields.

In conversion the soul becomes youthful. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." Of the host of Israel it was the children and not the fathers who entered the land of Canaan; and they entered that high mountain land not by the highest pass, but at the lowest point in the valley of the Jordan—the deepest depression in the world. And so it is by the deepest humility and con-

trition that we enter into the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. It is not as a teacher come from God perfecting our imperfect knowledge that we are to regard Jesus, but as a Saviour saving us radically from sin and death. It is not instruction that we need, but a new birth—of the water and of the Spirit—in which a complete cleansing shall take place regarding the past, and a new spiritual life shall be communicated as regards the future. It is not in the clear rivers in the uplands of Damascus, but in the dark waters deep down in the defiles of Israel, that we are to wash away our spiritual leprosy, to have our heart and life purified, and our flesh made like unto the flesh of a little child. In conversion the whole man is renewed; the whole work of the devil in man is destroyed; all the effects of sin in his whole nature eradicated. "If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature; all old things have passed away, and all things have become new." Body, soul, and spirit are sanctified, and preserved blameless unto the coming of Christ. "Then He is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom. His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth."

Humanity rejuvenizes itself in the birth of every child; and grows young again in the youth of its children. Full of selfishness and falsehood—of sorrow and evil—as is the world, it has, at least, one redeeming point in the constant presence of children in it. This inspires hope and sustains faith. It is the most powerful element in human progress. Growing old ourselves, with hearts

dry and withered, we take our little ones by the hand, and traverse the wearisome, monotonous round of life with them again, and find it all new. Our own character fixed, our opinions become prejudices—this young generation with plastic minds comes forward to carry on the work of the world a few steps, and to become stereotyped in turn. In the rise and fall of nations, in the birth and death of individuals, humanity rejuvenizes itself. The individual and national life are parallel, for the birth and death of an organic particle in the person answers to the birth and death of an individual in the nation. "Man is the archetype of society," and individual development the model of social progress. Races become old and effete, and yield the van of progress to young races, with fresh enthusiastic blood in their veins; and those pestilences and famines that have periodically occurred in history seem to have favoured this renovation of mankind by cutting off the old and feeble, and leaving only the strong and healthy to perpetuate a more vigorous race. Humanity rejuvenizes itself in the progress of civilization, which is disclosing more and more of what is contained in human character and capacities, and is a constant recollection of the original destination of human life.

But the greatest of all rejuvenescences was the origin of Christianity. This sums up in itself all other rejuvenescences, and gives them a significance and a value which they do not otherwise possess. The birth of our Lord is the most wonderful illustration of the great law by which life of every kind returns to an earlier condition,

in order to obtain a point of departure for renewed progress on a higher plane. "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." In the person of the child Jesus, humanity became young again. By His works the world became a new creation. Sin had made nature old in barrenness and poverty and disorder; sin had worn out the human frame with disease and defect and death; sin had subjected the spirit to the bondage of evil. From all these disabilities and evils the miracles of Jesus delivered nature and human nature. By the multiplication of the loaves and the changing of water into wine, our Lord removed the poverty of fallen nature, and brought back the fertility and abundance of the unfallen world, before the curse had been pronounced, "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee; in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." The miracle of walking on the sea re-asserted the sovereignty over nature which man had lost. The calming of the storm brought back nature to the peace and order of Eden. The healing of blindness, deafness, dumbness, fever, leprosy, and all the other diseases caused by sin, brought back man's body to the healthiness and vigour which it had when it sprang fresh from the Creator's hand; while the casting out of devils and the forgiveness of sin restored man's spirit to the freedom and purity of its first estate.

Across all these rejuvenescences comes the terrible "Thus far shalt thou go, but no farther," of death. But this most mysterious riddle of nature's Sphinx is interpreted by Him who brought life and immortality to

light. He has shown to us in His miracles and in His own person, that death is but the sleep of rejuvenescence —the greatest retreat and gathering in of life for the greatest transformation—deeper and longer-continued than the embryonal or pupa sleep; but as certain to issue in a higher state and in a nobler form. It is not the storm or the blight that decays and pushes off the autumn leaf, but the growth of the bud behind it. So it is the expansion of immortal life behind that pushes off this mortal life. The outward man perisheth *because* the inward man is renewed more and more. "It is not death that destroys," says Fichte, "but the higher life which, concealed behind the other, begins to develop itself. Death and birth are but the struggle of life with itself to attain a higher form." The body is shed, like an autumn leaf from the bough of life, every seven years, leaving its bud to perpetuate the same existence; but in death it leaves behind not a bud, but a seed or germ—sowing not that which shall be but bare grain—from which will be developed the body of immortality. The body that is laid in the grave is only the last, it may be, of a long series, out of which the soul has successively departed; and as the soul has moulded and preserved the identity of these successive bodies raised from the bud, so it will mould and preserve the identity of the last glorious body that shall be raised from the seed.

Every rejuvenescence which man experiences is an additional assurance to him that, as he has borne the image of the earthy, so he will bear the image of the heavenly. We have proofs and anticipations of this in

the fact that there is hardly one of our organs which fulfils a mere animal purpose. The brain, while it is necessary to the process of digestion and locomotion, is also the medium of thought; the lungs that purify the blood are also organs of speech; the heart that circulates the blood is also the seat of the emotions and affections. The spiritual stamps its impress upon every part of the body, and claims it for its own purposes. The very waste or dross of the body which is carried away by the breath, is minted in language into the coinage of the soul. In the development of the body through all its stages, we see the complete subordination of structure to spirit and spiritual purpose. The nervous system, which is the noblest part of our body and the immediate instrumentality of the spirit, is the first part that appears in the human germ; and as it develops from the primitive groove, all the rest of the structure is introduced to minister to it. The digestive, the circulating, the secretory, the respiratory apparatus, are all merely its subordinates and servants. It uses them in succession in carrying out its great aim at psychical development; leaves behind the germinal membrane when the stomach is prepared, and passes from aquatic to aërial respiration. It changes the very nature of its organs. It breathes by a membrane, by gills, and by lungs; it carries on its circulation without a heart, with a heart of one cavity, and finally with one of four. The particles of the body associated with it at birth all pass away at maturity, and are replaced by new ones. And in this elevation and discarding of the means by which it is attained, the principle

that animates the nervous system remains unchanged, and goes on from strength to strength. Do we not see in this, as Dr. Draper has so admirably pointed out, the complete subordination of structure, and the enduring character of spirit? And is there not good reason to conclude that the universal instinctive feeling of the ages and nations, that the spirit will exist after death, is not a vulgar illusion, but a solemn, philosophical fact? If the spirit has already survived so many changes, the renewal of organs and structures that seemed essential to its existence, are we not justified in expecting that it will survive the dissolution of the whole body, and complete in a future state the archetype towards which from the beginning to the end it has been advancing here.

This is the glorious hope set before us in the Gospel; this is the climax and consummation of all rejuvenescences here—the renewal of nature—of man's body—of his mind—his heart—his soul. All these renewals are leading to and preparing for the great renewal of heaven. The kingdom of heaven in its highest sense is the *restitution of all things*. It is the New Jerusalem, the realization at once of the true tendencies of man and the fulfilment of the ancient promises of God. It is the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness—not another physical world specially created for the dwelling-place of glorified humanity; but this earth itself which in all its various phases has been so closely united and bound up with the nature of man, and hallowed by the footsteps, yea, even by the tears and blood of the Son of God himself, and which in the end shall share in the new and wondrous

birth of redemption,—"put on its glorious resurrection robes and minister delight to the ennobled senses of the redeemed." "Behold, I make all things new," says the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End—not in the sense of a new creation, but in the sense of the perfect renovation and exaltation of the old. Mankind will return to the youth of Eden; paradise will be restored. The tree of life will bloom again, and the river of life will flow as the true fountain of youth through the unfading landscapes of immortality. All that Adam lost through disobedience will be restored in a higher shape through Christ's obedience. All that we loved and lost here will meet us there, and we shall rejoice, and our joy no man shall take from us. All the old things of the curse will pass away in the everlasting spring. The spirits of just men will be made perfect. There will be neither marrying nor giving in marriage—no birth, and consequently no death, for all will be as the angels of heaven. The angels wear the bloom of eternal youth, for whenever they appeared on earth they were seen as young men. And the redeemed in glory will have the body of their humiliation changed and fashioned like unto the body of Christ; and we know what a body that is—incorruptible, undefiled, unfading—Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

THE END.

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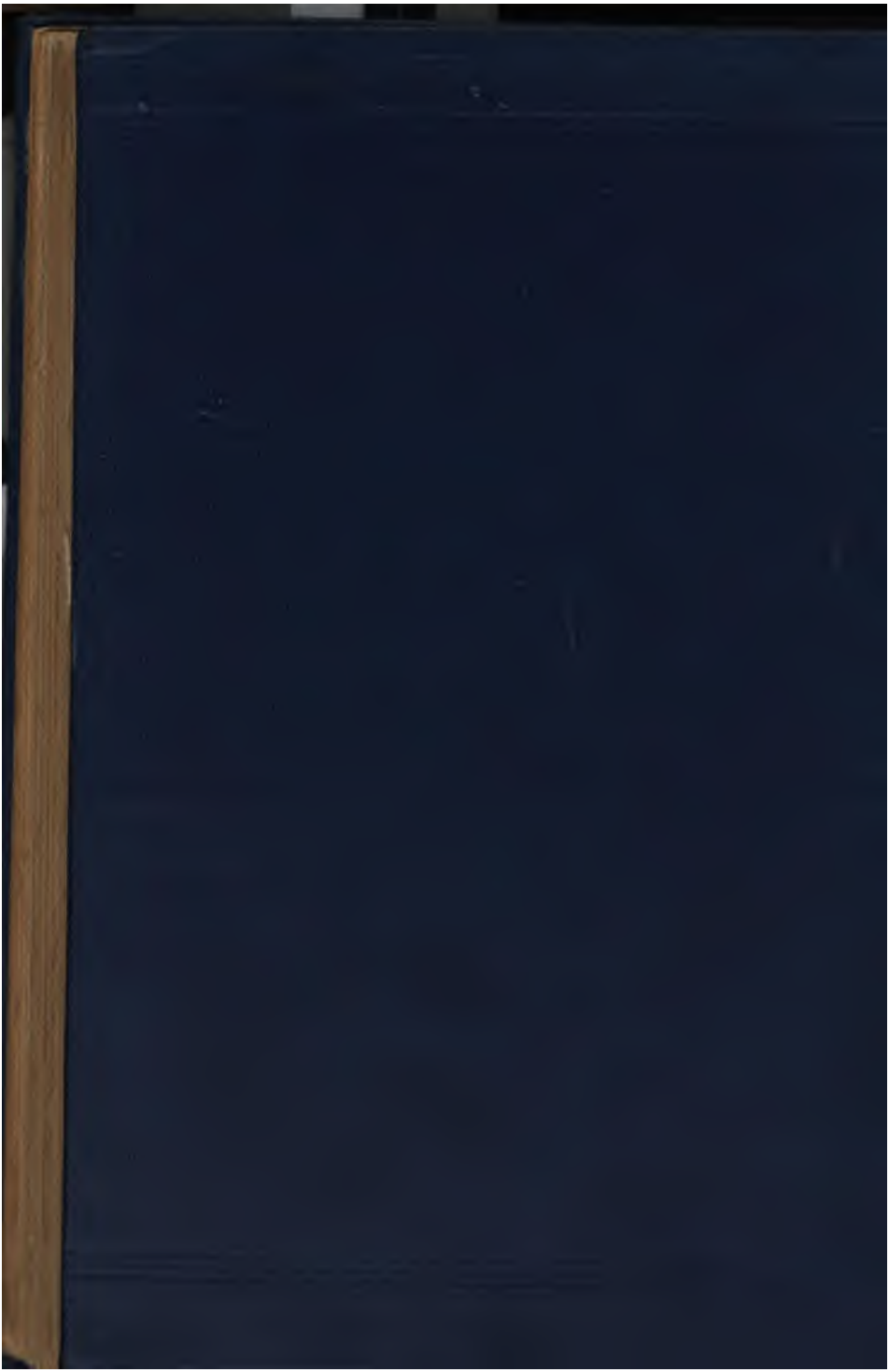
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